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## FACETS OF RAJAJI



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# **FACETS OF RAJAJI**

*Edited by*  
**B. K. AHLUWALIA**

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*TO THE MEMORY  
OF MY FATHER*

## P R E F A C E

Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, better known as Rajaji, was a multi-faceted personality. It is not certain who first called him Rajaji and when. The name carries with it deep love and endearment and establishes an affinity with him. He was a freedom fighter, statesman and scholar, thinker, humorist and humanist. He was above all a man of God. Strikingly self-reliant he had the courage of his convictions and was for over six decades one of the most outstanding, if controversial, figures in Indian politics. There was hardly any issue of importance which he did not analyse and illumine with his cool, clear and incisive intellect. Along with Gandhi, Nehru and Patel, he was one of the sturdy pillars of the Indian National Congress and first rank leader in the fight for the freedom of the country. After independence he succeeded Lord Mountbatten as the Governor General of India.

Though a close friend of Gandhiji, Rajaji was never a blind or unreasoning follower. He occasionally differed from and crossed swords with Gandhiji and earned the Mahatma's deepest regard for his uprightness, ability, courage and political wisdom. Gandhiji used to call him as his "conscience keeper."

His numerous books, and especially the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, will live for generations and help to maintain ancient Indian culture as an ingredient of modern education. He has done the best service to his country through his writings. Rajaji himself says, "The best service I have rendered to my people is the retelling of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. This has been a source of great joy to me in the evening of my life. It is good to be a political and national worker and to take office and work hard. But I have seen that it is better to be able to leave it and enjoy the company of the sages of our land and to help them and to speak to our men and women again."

Rajaji would have been great in any country, in any age, on account of his scholarship, his spirituality, and his patriotism.



The Volume endeavours to project Rajaji's personality as viewed by eminent contemporaries most of whom had known him intimately in life. Each of them reveals his view of a particular facet of the great leader. Together they will provide the reader with a lucid and integrated picture of the great man and his work and message.

I am grateful to the authors of the articles in this volume and also the following publications : *Indian & Foreign Review* for "As I knew Him"; *Swarajya* for—"He Laid the Foundation of Parliamentary Life"; "The One and Only Rajaji". *Rajaji 93* (a Souvenir Volume) for "Unqualified Record of Service", "Lone Crusader for Human Rights", "How I Grew Fond of Rajaji", "The Shining Light of Wisdom", "Unmoved, Unshaken, Unseduced, Unterrified", "Unequaled Record of Service", "As Governor General of India", "Concern for Human Welfare", "Gandhiji and Rajaji", "A Sheaf of Memories", "Many Splendoured Services", "A Daughter's Reminiscences", "My Early Recollections" and "The Crusader for Prohibition", *Sunday Standard* for "His Love for his Fellowmen", *Triveni* for "As I Knew Him", "Soul of Dharma", "Instrument of God"; *Freedom Fighters of India* for "A Transcendent Personality", *Khadi Gramodyog* for "Recalling His Greatness."

I am grateful to Professor K. Swaminathan, Chief Editor and Shri J.P. Uniyal Deputy Chief Editor of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, who were good enough to offer me useful suggestions and other help.

—B.K. AHLUWALI A

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## As I Knew Him

It was a great shock to me when the Queen's Private Secretary, Sir Martin Charteris rang me up to tell me of the death of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, or Rajaji, as he was affectionately known, who had been a personal friend of mine for more than a quarter of a century.

When I came out of India as Viceroy, in March 1947, I got to know him as one of my Cabinet Ministers. He had such a clear and candid mind and was so ready to enter into sympathetic and useful discussions, that our many interviews were sources of real pleasure to me, and I hope, to him too.

After the transfer of power on August 15, 1947, when I found it impossible to obtain Mr. Jinnah's agreement to keep India unified, he was given the vital post of Governor of West Bengal.

My wife and I enjoyed our visit to Calcutta in 1948 when we stayed with him, and found him a truly delightful host. We were particularly moved by the eloquent and friendly speech he made in Calcutta about us. His command of the English language was complete. Very few Englishmen spoke English as beautifully as he did.

Trained in our law, he was a life-long believer in the principle of British jurisprudence, which he upheld not only as Governor of West Bengal, but much more importantly as Governor-General of India, for it was he who succeeded me in this post in June 1948.

I do not believe a more admirable choice could have been made by the Government of India than Rajaji to be the first Indian Head of State in succession to the last British Head of State of India.



He had a never failing sense of humour. He sent me a copy of the photograph taken on the steps of Rashtrapati Bhavan as I greeted him on his arrival to take over from me. On this he had written: "So the magician inducted me into trouble".

He had a high sense of humour, and wrote to me more than once expressing his distress that the agreement made by his Government, with the ruling princes of India, had not been kept inviolate.

He was an ardent believer in parliamentary democracy and was convinced that India needed a strong opposition party available, to form an alternative government if elected. He told me that it was on these grounds that he had formed the Swatantra Party after his time as Governor-General came to an end.

He came to have luncheon with my daughter and me on his way through London to visit the United Nations headquarters.

We had a very happy and nostalgic re-union; he was as affectionate as ever.

On my last visit to India in 1967, I offered to go to Madras to see him in view of the fact that he was then nearly 90 years old. However, he insisted on coming up to Delhi and my elder daughter Patricia Brabourne and I had an emotional meeting with him in our old study in Rashtrapati Bhavan.

He agreed to record an interview for the television series of my "Life and times", which has so far been shown in 79 countries. By common consent this and the interview which the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, recorded, were regarded as outstanding.

He was the last of that generation of Indian leaders who brought about the transfer of power peacefully and in friendship. Without the support of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajagopalachari and their immediate colleagues, I could never have found a workable solution, which was hailed in the British Parliament as "a treaty of peace without a war".

Rajaji's name will be held in honour not only in his beloved India but throughout Great Britain.

## A Unique Personality

Sri Rajagopalachari, or Rajaji, as he is lovingly called, has been amongst the front-rank politicians of the Gandhian era and on every occasion his contribution has been unique and magnificent. Mahatma Gandhi discovered him and ever since then he has been in the front rank for the last forty years and more. I will illustrate this by referring to particular incidents. He joined the non-violent non-cooperation movement not only with great zeal but with a clear perception of its programme and implications, and soon became one of the finest advocates and interpreters of it. He organized the province of Madras with the help of others, of course, in a way which at once attracted the attention of the people and commanded the respect of other provinces.

After Mahatma Gandhi's incarceration early in 1922, differences arose amongst Congressmen about the programme of the Congress. As will be recollected, the programme comprised boycott of legislative councils, boycott of government-recognized schools and colleges, boycott of law courts and boycott of government honours and titles. Later on encouragement of spinning and weaving and boycott of foreign cloth were added. The differences that arose were with regard to the boycott of legislatures. The group led by the late Deshabandhu CR Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai Patel and N C Kelkar and others was in favour of entering the legislative councils and practising non-cooperation from within, whereas others, under the leadership of Sri Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jamnalal Bajaj and others were in favour of continuing the boycott of legislatures.

The Congress appointed a committee to enquire into and report on whether the country was prepared for undertaking civil disobedience, and after the report of the committee, the movement



for lifting the boycott of legislatures gained force and momentum, as civil disobedience was considered impracticable for the time being. As most of the biggest and most influential leaders were in favour of lifting the boycott of legislatures, the task of defending and maintaining the boycott of legislatures fell on Rajaji who became the leader of the group of "no-changers." His power of acute analysis, trenchant criticism and resourceful argument were seen at their best, not only at public meetings which he addressed all over the country but also at the meetings of the All-India Congress Committee and those of other similar organizations.

It was not a little due to his rhetorical gifts that the 'no-changers'—that is, those who opposed any change in the Congress programme—succeeded in gaining the majority of about two-thirds against one-third at the annual session of the Congress at Gaya over which Deshbandhu Das presided and which lasted longer and had more speeches from all sides than any other annual session of the Congress, or any other subject in its history. Not only did he address the meetings of the Subjects Committee but he also went round the camps of the delegates from different provinces and addressed them separately before the matter came up for final voting at the Congress session. Some time later he undertook a tour of the country on which it was my privilege to join him and also translate his speeches, which were delivered in English, into Hindi, which, while giving me an opportunity of learning a lot, also saved me the trouble of delivering independent speeches of my own, which I doubt not would have fallen flat after his brilliant performance.

It has been one of the inexplicable circumstances in his life that at times he has practically withdrawn from public controversy and remained aloof until the time when he could come again on the scene and shine at his best. Such a period came after the active controversy regarding entering the councils had subsided. During that period Mahatma Gandhi concentrated on constructive programme, one main item of which was the revival of spinning and weaving and propagating the *charkha*. He was appointed chief organizer for his State and he did the work so extremely well that Madras Presidency became one of the best organized provinces for *khadi*.



It was my good fortune to visit the Ashram which he had established in the interior of Salem district where khadi work was organized on an extensive and intensive scale by friends like Sri K Santhanam under the guidance and supervision of Rajaji. As is his wont, he himself became a fine spinner and worked out all the details of the khadi programme with his special knowledge and experience, and Madras khadi became well-known all over the country. I remember to have visited Madras State to see its khadi work and was always able to see how well the organization had been built up and how well not only the production part but also the distribution and sales departments were organized.

This went on for some years and then the great movement of civil disobedience came in round about 1930. As was to be expected, he was again in the forefront and led the movement and was naturally in jail as so many others were. At the end of this period of active civil disobedience with breaks, the Congress in 1937 decided to accept not only the programme of entering the councils but also of accepting Ministership if the Government of the time fulfilled certain conditions. Rajaji was one of the first to form the Ministry in his State, where he did excellent work as Prime Minister. In that capacity he enforced some of the programmes which Gandhiji had suggested and which the Congress had accepted, such as the promotion of prohibition of intoxicating drugs and liquors, prohibition of untouchability and spread of Hindi, and ruled his province with a clear grip on facts. Ultimately the Ministry which he had formed had to resign like other Congress Ministries on account of the Second World War. As Prime Minister he did very good work and this used to be regarded as a model to be followed by the Ministries of other States. It showed that he was as successful as an administrator as he had been as a debater, and in this capacity he utilized the talents of all those who had worked with him and under him during the non-cooperation movement.

It may be noted that although he has been a leader within the Congress and carried out its programmes with his great ability whenever the call came, he has not always been a silent and passive supporter of these programmes. There have been occasions when he differed, and differed rather acutely, from his colleagues including



even Mahatma Gandhi. But the most wonderful thing about it is that although he differed from Gandhiji occasionally, he retained the deep respect which he had for him and Gandhiji also reciprocated this gesture of Rajaji. On account of his keen intellect he has been admired as much as he has been feared by his opponents in public controversy, and there have been quite a few such occasions. There were serious differences between him and others, including Gandhiji, in connection with the movement which culminated in the 'Quit India' Resolution of the All-India Congress Committee in August 1942. He was out of that movement because he did not approve of it. But that did not lessen the respect in which he was held by all including those whom he opposed, and so when power again came into the hands of the Congress in 1947, his services were sought after and obtained in different capacities. He became the Governor of West Bengal, then the last Governor-General; later, a Minister in the Central Government, and ultimately again Chief Minister in his home State.

In all these roles, wherever he worked, he always showed remarkable gifts of organization and capacity for administration. After his retirement from the post of Chief Minister, he has been leading more or less a private life in the sense that he is no longer associated with the Congress Party as such, and has been carrying on, on his own, as an independent and free thinker. During his later days he has come to feel that in a democracy a well-organized Opposition is as necessary as the party in power. With that end in view he had founded the Swatantra Party which has a programme of its own, which differs from that of the Congress and can very well form an alternative to the Congress programme if it can gain the support of the people. With the exception of the Communist Party no other party has got such a clear-cut and well-defined programme differing from that of the Congress as the Swatantra Party has. But it is a remarkable thing that he has remained only a founder of the party and has put others in charge of its detailed working as president and secretary, or as members of the legislatures when the elections have come.

It is not for me to discuss in detail his programme and point out wherein it differs from the Congress programme or that of other parties. It is enough to say that it has its distinctness and has its able



advocates. Although the Swatantra Party was formed but just a little over two years before the last general elections, it put up candidates in the different States and in one or two of them it gained a pretty large number of adherents and in one State at least it formed the main Opposition to the Congress Party.

Only a short time ago the Gandhi Peace Foundation organized a Convention to protest against nuclear tests and a deputation with Rajaji as one of its members was sent to Western countries like America and England. It is no exaggeration to say that Rajaji created a great impression wherever he went and his arguments were appreciated wherever he spoke and discussed the subject.

In his later years he has been writing especially in *Swarajya* from week to week applying his trenchant criticism to the present Government policy, programme and action, and there is no doubt that his writings have contributed very largely not only to the formation of the Swatantra Party with its own distinct policy and programme, but also to the creation of a general interest even amongst those who do not belong to that party in its policy and programme. His articles are read by a very wide circle as these are reproduced in other papers also, and there is no doubt that even where people disagree with his views they read his articles with respect. For a man of his age, to undertake not only writing day after day and week after week for papers on current and even abstruse subjects, but to go on deputation to different countries is a feat of endurance and hard work which might well be envied by many of very much younger age. And for all his age there is no weakening noticeable in his writings as he was, say, in 1922, forty years ago. Only the subject has changed, the point of view has changed, the persons concerned are changed, but his logic and analysis and his opinions are as pointed and searching as they ever have been.

Rajaji has not been a mere political agitator. As I have said, he has made positive contributions in various administrative capacities and has left his mark on the subjects he has dealt with. He has also been an active social reformer in his own person and has given a direct blow to the system of caste, although originally he was with orthodox groups among Brahmins. He has not been blessed with robust

health and I know how grievously he suffered from asthma in those early years (1922 and after) when I had just begun to get the preliminary experience of this fell disease. But the most remarkable thing is not the fact that he has worked hard in spite of it, but that he has also succeeded in curing himself of it, not so much by medication as by regulating his life, his food and his habits. I sometimes wonder if I should be envying him for his great mental gifts, or for the strength of his will which he has shown not only in matters of public importance but also in his personal and domestic life. He has, however, not been happy in his domestic life, having a widowed daughter and a widowed daughter-in-law to be looked after. But he has never allowed any of these depressing things to influence him in public affairs and has carried on like one who has no private cares.

No appreciation of Rajaji can be complete without a reference to the devotion with which he has made available to the readers both of Tamil and English, the gems of the great epics, the RAMAYANA and the MAHABHARATA. On the whole, if I were asked to say in one word what he is, I should say: he is unique, unique where he agrees with one, unique where he disagrees with one, unique in his thought and unique in his action. It has been my privilege to have not only gained his affection and goodwill but also to have retained these all these forty years and more without a single break or a single moment of flurry, in spite of differences in points of view.



## Many-Splendoured Services

While Rajaji himself in his characteristic self-effacement may not like a volume to be brought out to commemorate his birthday, it is only apt that the nation should pay him a tribute for his many-splendoured services to the country. Of him it may be truly said that he has led a life of sacrifice and dedication. One may not agree with some of his views, nevertheless none will ever question his *bona fides* or the purity of his motives. He has the capacity to express his views with clarity and precision and he does it without fear. No wonder he is considered to be the *Bhishma* in the Indian political scene.

It has been my privilege to have enjoyed his friendship for more than half a century—from 1918 when he became the principal lieutenant of Mahatma Gandhi. Our association became closer with the passage of time. Giving due regard to my labour and trade union background, Rajaji used to discuss with me various policies of the Congress in the matter of dealing with the workers and their problems and gave consideration to my views.

Later, when the Congress assumed office in 1937 in the Madras province under the Government of India Act of 1935, the mantle of leadership rightly fell on his shoulders. He chose me as a Minister of his Cabinet and assigned to me the portfolios of Labour, Industries, Co-operation, Electricity, etc. The first Congress Government had to function under severe limitations, for, the Governor then had considerable powers. It must be said to Rajaji's credit that he tried to bring about a proper understanding and find satisfactory solution to many issues avoiding a confrontation between the Governor and the Government.

When we were ministerial colleagues in 1937-39, there were indeed occasions when Rajaji and I differed from each other in our

approaches to some problems. But I must say that he never considered it below his dignity or wisdom to appreciate and accept the suggestions which I made once he was convinced that I was right in my conclusions.

There was a big trade dispute in the Madurai and Papanasam Mills owned by the Harveys in 1938, and the employers declared a lockout. Nearly 20,000 workers were faced with the ordeal of willing to work and yet denied the opportunity to do so. And this lockout continued for nearly three months. My attempts to make the employers take up a reasonable attitude were not successful and they decided to reopen the mills and lift the lockout on certain conditions which were against the interest of the workers. Their intention was to employ only those 'loyal' workers or recruit fresh hands, keeping out those whom they considered to be active trade union workers or 'inconvenient' to them. When I learnt of this, I suggested to Rajaji that the management should never be allowed to have their way and open the mills unless a satisfactory settlement was reached between the workers and themselves. I decided that an order under Section 144 Cr PC should be issued against the management directing them not to open the mills till a settlement was arrived at. Rajaji was rather surprised at this unconventional approach but finally agreed with me that a drastic view must be taken in the matter in order to bring the erring employer to reason. When Rajaji telephoned to the Governor, who was at that time at Ooty, informing him of the proposed step, the Governor expressed his disagreement ; but Rajaji was firm and informed the Governor that if the views of the Government were not accepted, his Government would resign. Ultimately, for the first time in the history of the country, Section 144 was imposed against the management compelling the employers to climb down from their high pedestal and reach a final settlement with the workers. I am referring to this incident to show that once Rajaji takes a definite stand, he sticks to it irrespective of consequences.

Again, there was a stay-in strike of workers in a jute mill in Chitavalasa in 1939, and without much provocation and justification, Crombie, who was then the District Magistrate at Visakhapatnam, went into the mills and ordered firing at unarmed workers. When



I assumed office as Minister for Labour in 1937, I had given a general direction to all the District Magistrates that whenever strikes or lockouts occurred, before firing or any strong action was to be taken, they should inform the representatives of the workers of their intentions and try to see whether such drastic actions could be avoided. I have always felt that a strike should not be treated as a law and order problem but should be dealt with more as a human one, and it was negotiation and conciliation that should be the method to resolve any deadlock. This firing as a result of Crombie's orders caused a wide stir and resentment among the workers not only in Chitavalasa but throughout the Madras Province. I advised Rajaji that this was a fit case for the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry and he accepted my suggestion. And later, on the report of the Commission of Inquiry, Crombie was finally transferred from Waltair to Bellary.

Rajaji had many firsts to his credit. The introduction of Sales Tax and Prohibition throughout the Madras State are conspicuous examples of the lead he gave to the country. He showed great wisdom and tact in piloting these measures in spite of opposition from some quarters. When the Sales Tax Act was passed by the Legislature and sent to the Viceroy, there was an apprehension that the necessary assent might not be given to the Act, but Rajaji made Delhi understand that his Ministry was likely to take the step of resigning if the assent was not forthcoming. Prompt assent was given by the Viceroy to the Sales Tax Act !

During the August 1942 movement, Gandhiji gave the 'Quit India' call and thousands of our countrymen followed his lead. Gandhiji felt that while our countrymen should not adopt violent methods against the British, they should resort to non-violent non-cooperation. Rajaji differed from the Mahatma on this issue. Subsequent events no doubt proved the farsightedness of Gandhiji. When he advocated the policy of cooperation with the British, Rajaji had to face a very hostile public opinion. He was prepared to espouse his viewpoint vigorously even at the risk of unpopularity — an ingrained characteristic of Rajaji.

In spite of the fact that we had differences on many issues, my regard and respect for Rajaji and his affection and love for me had

never diminished. When I became Vice-President and called on him after assuming this office, Rajaji expressed to me his happiness at my election. When I decided to contest for the Presidential election as an independent candidate, Rajaji could not allow himself to support my candidature. It will not be out of place to mention that initially Rajaji was an ardent advocate of the free vote in the Presidential election. He had said that while individuals high and low may nominate candidates, the voting should be left to the free judgment of the voters. When, however, I appealed to the electors to vote according to the dictates of their conscience, Rajaji did not choose to support the point of view which he himself had advocated earlier.



## A Son's Recollections

My recollections about my father, Rajaji, naturally go a long time back. One of the earliest public events I can recollect is that of a public gathering he addressed at what was then known as Victoria Maidanam of Salem. He was announcing his decision to resign his Municipal Chairmanship of Salem Town; the words I could then follow and still remember were : "The task of a Municipal Chairman is very difficult !"

It may be of interest to mention in this connection that my father had proposed even then that toddy shops should be moved out of town. The District Collector did not agree with him. The District Police, however, agreed. The matter went up to the Government which upheld the stand of the Police and the Municipal Chairman.

Those were the days when India was functioning under what was used to be called the Minto-Morley Reforms. Once, while he was practising as a lawyer at Salem, my father was suddenly called to defend Dr. P. Varadarajulu Naidu who was being prosecuted for sedition. The way Rajaji conducted the case evoked admiration from everybody. It was a turning point in Rajaji's life in as much as he was drawn fully to politics from that time onwards.

Gandhiji has vividly described in his *Autobiography* how he thought of the method of Satyagraha against repressive measures of the Government and how the final idea came to him in a dream when he was my father's guest in 1919 at Cathedral Road, Madras. Very soon Satyagraha, which included fasting, was launched on a nation-wide scale for the first time. My father was assisted in those days by Va Ra in bringing out cyclostyled handbills in Tamil. Va Ra was a young man then who afterwards established himself as a great scholar-writer in Tamil.



Gandhiji had just then placed the non-cooperation programme before the public. My father who had come completely under the spell of Gandhiji decided to give up his flourishing practice. It caused great sensation in the close circles of our family and friends. For my grandfather it was a rude shock. A poor village Munsif, he had with great difficulty brought up and educated his son and had naturally entertained great hopes of his career. When this son gave up the profession, though he had a family of five children to support, it plunged our grandfather in great sorrow. He was quite irritated with the man whom he considered to be the chief 'culprit' of it all, namely, Gandhiji !

We, brothers and sisters, learnt one day that Gandhiji was going to call on our grandfather. Knowing how angry he was with Gandhiji, we were quite interested in his reactions to the impending visit of Gandhiji to him. So we asked him what he would say to Gandhiji against whom he had pent up feelings, when the latter met him. Our grandfather said: "Let him come; he will have the worst of it from me. Gandhiji has ruined the entire family by mesmerising my son." Later in the evening, after our return from schools, we learnt that when Gandhiji asked grandfather whether he liked his son joining his band of non-cooperators, grandfather had replied that he was very happy that his son had joined Gandhiji in serving the nation. The reply to Bapu was more or less on these lines: "You are doing Loka Seva and my son has joined you in this good work. I am happy about it." We were quite surprised at this turn of events. We asked grandfather about this. Pat came the reply! "He had mesmerised my son completely and when he talked with me, he mesmerised me also and I became spellbound. He is a mischievous magician. Let him come again. I will have it out with him." Naturally, we were very much amused by his remarks.

I remember another incident which happened in the early twenties. My father was addressing a public meeting at Shevvapet in Salem on the evils of drink. There was also a campaign against buying by auction the licence to sell toddy. The anti-drink campaign was such a success that sales fell down steeply. When my father was making his speech at the meeting, a big stone was hurled at him by someone in the crowd. It hit the back of his head. He, however,



continued his speech for a little while and was later taken to Dr. Srinivasiah's dispensary where he was given treatment (his head was bandaged). When he came home, it was obvious that the injury was very severe. It surprised me much, young as I was then, to see my father bearing the whole thing without making any fuss about it.

When he was sentenced for the first time, the period of imprisonment was three months which he felt was too light. When he was about to be taken to the Vellore Jail he wrote to Gandhiji with a combination of humour and hope, somewhat to this effect: "My sentence is cheap, only three months. But it does not matter because by that time your dream of 'Swaraj in one year' would have been realized. We will then have to go back to our hobbies, you will probably recommence your experiments on dietetics!"

Rajaji took up the editorship of Gandhiji's weekly, *Young India*, on 1st June 1922. Writing on that date about Motilal Nehru, he said: "Coming out of prison he will find the country without Gandhiji and the Anand Bhavan without Jawaharlal. To few warriors is given the privilege, when in the thick of the fight themselves, of sending their young Abhimanyus and Indrajits to the battlefield."

When Gandhiji was in jail, Motilal Nehru and Deshabandhu CR Das wanted the boycott of Councils to be lifted. My father was opposed to this and headed the majority group in the Congress known then as 'no-pro-changers'. As is the case with all political issues, the controversy was keen and at times became even personal. Deshabandhu Das conducted a whirlwind tour of the country campaigning for his programme. In the course of his tour, he came to Salem to address a public meeting. A vast crowd had gathered. When Deshabandhu Das arrived, Rajaji was there at the meeting spot to greet him in person. To everyone's surprise both Rajaji and Deshabandhu Das were very happy to meet. They embraced each other warmly. There were, however, murmurs of protest from some that Rajaji and Deshabandhu should not have met and that each should have kept his distance from the other. Even to this day there are people who think that differences of opinion in politics should be carried to bitter extremes. God help them!

There was another interesting episode. Gandhiji and my father

corresponded with each other quite often. Naturally, the correspondence was in English. One fine morning Gandhiji wrote a letter in Hindi in which he reiterated his decision to conduct his future correspondence with him in Hindi. Without delay father replied to Bapu in Tamil! Eventually, Gandhiji agreed to go back to English for corresponding with Rajaji.

Once, Srimati Kasturba Gandhi visited the Tiruchengode Gandhi Ashram. Father took her around to various sections there. When she was at the section where Khadi pieces and yarn were undergoing dyeing. Ba, as she was affectionately called by everyone, asked in her broken English: "Colour go?" Father replied: "This is no-go-colour," and his reply provoked laughter. Ba asked him in all simplicity, whether her English was wrong. Father added to mirth by saying: "No, it is Ba's English." Such were the cordial and intimate terms on which father moved with Bapu as well as with Smt. Kasturba.



## Daughter's Reminiscences

Every year we eagerly look forward to December 8, which is celebrated as the birthday of our father. In our younger days we had never celebrated his birthday in our home. For some years now, his admirers and friends have made this a festive occasion. We are immensely happy to join them. On that day, right from dawn, friends call on him to convey their *pranams* and get his blessings. They offer flowers and fruits. Among them the Sadasivams always manage to be the very first.

Anna too—that is how we affectionately call our father—attends to his daily routine like bath and breakfast a bit earlier that day than on other days and takes his seat in the reception room. He welcomes each and every caller with love and makes kind enquiries of them. He really feels happy in doing this. *Prasadams* from various temples are also offered to Anna. It is quite a job for my sister, Namagiri, to store the fruits, flowers and *prasadams* properly and return the containers—plates, baskets and vessels—to the respective parties, and distribute them; but she finds pleasure in doing it. So slips the day like a festival.

Anna is like a banyan tree to us—the 'our' and 'us' in this article comprise three generations. Amidst the joys and sorrows of our little lives, we find peace under the shade of this mighty tree. It is from him that we get suggestions to solve our problems. We are benefited by his advice, full of clarity, wisdom and exhilarating freshness—qualities which are surprisingly unimpaired by age.

Anna is endowed with the spiritual strength that is the mark of a true Brahmin. In addition, he brims with the indomitable courage of a Kshatriya fighting for noble causes, without ever losing heart. He has always been fighting against social injustices. He fought for the independence of the nation. After independence he is still fighting for his ideals.

There will be many contributors to this Souvenir writing on Anna. It is not proper that I, his daughter, should say much. Anyhow, I would like to share some recollections that just cross my mind.

We lost our mother, while we were very young. We were looked after by our paternal grandfather and his sister. Off and on my maternal grandparents also came to our place, and occasionally other close relatives paid us visits. My grandfather loved Anna as his very life-breath. Anna too reciprocated the love and attended on his father with intense affection.

In our nonage we lived in a big, old, western-style bungalow in Salem. The servants often frightened us with accounts of a ghost which haunted that house. They swore they had seen it quite often. One day I asked Anna whether that could be true.

"The fear you have about the ghost is itself the ghost. If you get rid of the fear from your mind, it means the ghost has been exercised," said Anna.

That drove away the terror from my mind.

I trembled whenever there was a thunder. I was terribly afraid the thunder might "fall" on my head.

Anna told me: "You hear the thunder only *after* the lightning has exhausted itself. Lightning is caused by friction among the clouds, and the sound that goes along with this is the thunder. We see the lightning first. It is only after that the sound reaches us. So there is no cause to be alarmed about a thing that is already over."

This explanation assuaged my fear to some extent.

Anna used to go to the court wearing *Pancha-kachcham* and black coat. He donned a silver-laced white turban. 'Tiruman'—the Vaishnava mark of a red streak inside a white U—was always there on his forehead. Two persons had to stretch the two ends of the turban cloth before it could be folded and 'ironed' in the homely way. We, as children, very much liked to assist Anna in this.

Every one of us was seated on a wooden plank while eating.



Food was served on leaves. Anna would allow curd to be served for him, only after ascertaining there was enough of curd to go round for all of us.

Years rolled on. The Satyagraha struggle was launched. What a turn it brought about in the lives of many! Recently, I read the 'Jail Diary' of Anna, written during his first incarceration for participation in Satyagraha. When I reflect upon the hardships he underwent in his prison-life in Vellore Central Jail, I feel we have no justification to complain about whatever happens to us. I quote a few entries from the diary kept during the period January 3 to March 20, 1922.

Date: 3-1-1922

The fever left me at about three in the morning having been dosed with calomel and quinine. The hospital is a real addition to the terrors of prison-life. It consists of three big rooms, and no small or special wards, with a verandah in front and another at the back. My ward contains twelve beds. The beds are all full of bugs. All the windows are barred and there is only one door. The place is locked up in the evening like the rest of the jail and the sentry shouts out his "All is well" into our very ears. The front verandah is not left vacant but is used for cases needing fresh air. The back verandah is a general latrine during the night, ie, from after lock-up at six in the evening. Incessant making of water and passing of stools by all sorts of patients. There are no commodes or decent chamber pots. Chatties without lids and general receptacles (big mud pots) are kept open the whole night. The place is a hell at night. But in the morning it is all cleared up and phenyle is liberally sprinkled and the Superintendent, who is an IMS doctor, comes in the morning when he sees nothing needing reform. Why a few proper chamber pots with lids and good commodes should not be kept in the hospital, I can't understand. They would be a non-recurring charge and, for quite moderate expense, add much to the sanitary condition.

Date: 6-1-1922

The mercury ointment has overshot the mark. It has blistered

my legs terribly. The doctor's attempts at doing good by hot fomentation was excruciatingly painful. He has added to the tortures by applying carbolic acid to the ulcers. But I am not here as a patient. I am here primarily as a prisoner, and it is grace on the part of the Government to take any trouble about my body. If they torture me for my ignorant over-application of mercury ointment, it is an unintended form of that violence which they would be entitled to apply directly if they liked, after passing the necessary legislation.

Date: 26-1-1922

Somehow my poor mother haunts my mind and sweetens my thoughts today. She could not imagine that her fond child, her pride and hope, would be in a common gaol, imprisoned and locked up under a 9-ft arch. I can fancy to myself all the pleasures of explaining to her the necessity and the beauty of this retirement and this struggle. Yet another soul there was who has now passed away from this earth, from whose mind too the idea was farthest that I should ever be in prison, a fate from which, to her delight and pride, I had saved so many of my clients.

These idle thoughts I occupied myself with, while getting over the hard breathing that worried me these days in the afternoons too, after my bath. Though the nights are free, I see that my constitution has become weak and has not been able to throw off the asthma—the least exertion brings it on in daytime.

Date: 11-2-1922

Had a letter from Gandhiji, besides one from home. The former is scrupulously non-political and dated the 3rd February from Bardoli. "I was glad and thankful to get your note. You certainly miss nothing by not having newspapers. And I do envy your spinning wheel and *Ramayana*. The latter, I hope, is not a wretched translation of Valmiki, but the original of Kamban of which I have read so much in Pope's Tamil Handbook. You must not lose flesh. I thought in our company I was the lowest weight. But you beat me



by fully 10 lbs now. I hope you are allowed plenty of milk. Let me prescribe for you. If you can get milk and plenty of sweet juicy fruit—oranges or grapes—you will get rid of your asthma and gain in weight. Devadas is in Allahabad. Kristodas and Ramdas look after me. You are not the only one to enjoy your solitude. Sundaram is just now at the Ashram undergoing a vow of silence. He has read too much and thought so little. His silence may do him good. Yours sincerely, MKG."

Date: 18-2-1922

A young fellow here puts the convict problem in a nutshell. He awaits his release in nine days. He is a first offender. He bought a new, fine, tempting piece of cloth for Rs 2 from a fellow who proved to be a thief. The latter was not caught, but the lad who bought the cloth was convicted. "People who go out come in again at once: what shall we do for this?" he asked pathetically. His own case was not a difficult one. He has father and mother and a family that work on a field taken on varam; so he can be absorbed in his family and be protected against a second offence or charge. But the ordinary man who has no such resource, but has to be a mere coolie and look out for himself, is in a sad plight. Hence, he comes in again and again, and puts on the old convict's black cap and makes the best of jail life as his only hope. It makes one sad to see some of the prisoners—a large number are criminally lazy and evade work, and a great deal more efficient supervision is necessary to set matters right--so hard working, so efficient and even conscientious in doing their task, under compulsion leading such well-disciplined lives, without drink, and without any other sin, yet slaving for nothing. If only they led such hard lives of purity and discipline in their own homes, how happy and prosperous they and their families could be! As soon as one of these is released, I suppose he takes a day's holiday and drinks, and then all the discipline is lost, and he is the old man again.

Date: 17-3-1922

Now that I am in "touching distance" of my discharge from



jail, I may record that these three months that I have spent here have been one of the happiest periods of my life.

Many a battle was fought, and at last, our country became independent. In independent India, Anna held many high offices. He has never forsaken his ideals for the sake of showy demonstration. Many have been the disappointments, many the occasions to sadden his heart. He has faced them all with extraordinary fortitude.

I seem to have written all in praise of my father. I try to recall whether there was an occasion when he gave offence by word or deed, whether there was an occasion when I saw a blemish in him. No, I can't recollect a single instance.

## Lone Crusader for Human Rights

We hear so much these days about the generation gap which usually signifies the gulf that divides age and youth to the advantage of the latter. But we seldom, if ever, recognize another generation gap—between the older race of politicians and leaders, and the politicians and leaders of today—a gap which in many ways can be interpreted to the advantage of the former. Rajaji typifies so much of the best in the old which is being gradually rung out by time and provides so much of the contrast with the new which has been rung in by the same process that the awareness of that gap is perhaps the most fruitful and profitable result of the study of his political career which spans more than 50 years from 1971 backwards.

The first time I felt drawn to Rajaji was when in Gandhiji's absence he put up a stubborn, valiant and unrelenting fight for Gandhiji's philosophies and programmes against the intelligent, competent and unsparing onslaughts of such advocates of eminence as Pandit Motilal Nehru and Deshabandhu Das. He and Sardar Patel were the two crusaders who stood for the leader whom the British had clapped in jail after a historic trial which I avidly followed from day to day and during which both Gandhiji's statement and the Court's judgment moved me deeply.

When Gandhiji was released from jail after his appendicitis operation, both Rajaji and Sardar Patel adopted the supporting role. The 'no-changers' allowed an open field to the Swaraj Party to fight the elections in 1923 on the slogan, to put it in the words of Deshabandhu Das: "Either we shall go to the Councils and wreck them or not go there at all." Rajaji followed Gandhiji though there was no doubt that the glamour of the stage had passed on to the two prophets of Council-entry, Motilal Nehru and CR Das. Both Rajaji and the Sardar settled down to the implementation of the constructive programme as laid down by Gandhiji, a programme which, in my



view, despite its certain rather retrogressive features, was of great value in inculcating the much needed qualities of dedication and discipline in the organization and focussing public attention on the evils of drink, on the problems of rural poverty, on uplift of backward classes and on Khadi movement. To my mind, this phase of Rajaji's life and the discipline and constructive ideals which he inculcated among the Justice Party-ridden Madras Presidency of those days was itself a great achievement. The enunciation of his views with a high religious, devotional or moral strain running through them not only put on the stamp of his intellectual qualities but also created an awareness of the place of morality and dignity in public life. There is no doubt that these had a profound influence on Gandhiji at the time. What he did for the propagation of Hindi in the South during those days brought the North and the South much closer than would have been possible merely under the inspiration of nationalism.

The next distinctive phase, so far as my memory goes, is the Council-entry programme of 1935-37, which again found the Sardar and Rajaji holding identical views. Although Sardar Patel spearheaded the counter-attack on Pandit Malaviya, who led the opposition to that programme, Rajaji's help in blunting the edge of attacks from confirmed no-changers has been acknowledged as invaluable. And after the ground had been cleared, thanks to the intervention of Gandhiji and the Viceroy, his assumption of office as Premier of Madras was a foregone conclusion. His stewardship of the administration of the Province marked a complete reversal of the tone and content of the administration as compared to the trends and traditions established by the Justice Party administration since the introduction of dyarchy in 1921.

It was well known that Rajaji did not agree with the official policy of the Congress on the war situation, nor on its relationship with the League. Few can deny that there was a great deal to be said for his viewpoints. He was, I think, one of the few leaders who could see the dangers of trimming their sails to the prevailing winds of fortunes of war. He could also project his mind forward to assessing the eventual consequences of such a policy. It would



always remain a speculative 'if' of history as to what the course of events would have been if Rajaji had succeeded in his attempts to bring the Congress and the British Government and the Congress and the League together during the critical yet decisive war years. History may well say in the long run that at least that afforded the only possibility of preventing the partition of the country. But, unfortunately, his own party men took things amiss and when the Congress leaders were released after the war, he became a target of bitter attacks by some of the distinguished leaders of the party. It is a tribute to his pre-eminence that he did return to the fold and re-occupied a position of prominence in the party which secured for him a membership of the Interim Government installed in September 1946.

Neither time nor party differences, however, mattered so far as Rajaji's relationship with Gandhiji and Sardar Patel was concerned. It was a personal bond between the three which transcended any apparent or real conflict of views. When partition came and a Governor was needed for West Bengal with its dominating administrative and communal problems, the choice fell on Rajaji. His wise counsels were an asset to the West Bengal leaders. But there was no doubt that during almost a year that he occupied that office he was isolated from the hub of national activities which Delhi had become.

He returned to the Capital in June 1948 to succeed Lord Mountbatten as Governor-General—succession which was not easy, having regard to the decisive influence in many directions which Lord Mountbatten, though a constitutional Head of Government, undoubtedly wielded. When Rajaji succeeded Mountbatten, things had more or less settled down and the influence of a constitutional Governor-General, even of Rajaji's eminence, could only be exercised and not seen or palpably felt. On the other hand, Rajen Babu was publicly active as the President of the Constituent Assembly. As a leader of consistent accord with Congress policies and with the stature acquired as Congress President for long periods, he acquired a position of vantage. When the new Constitution was inaugurated on 26th January 1950, a change took place in the



occupancy of Rashtrapati Bhavan which temporarily drew away Rajaji from Delhi to the South.

But the separation was not to endure for long. Rajaji received a call from Panditji and the Sardar to come to Delhi and join the Government which was to be reconstituted in a few weeks. When the Ministry was reconstituted towards the end of May, Rajaji was only a Minister without portfolio. On Sardar Patel's death on 15th December 1950, Rajaji received charge of Home Ministership, the States Ministry having been entrusted to Mr N Gopalaswamy Ayyangar. In the intervening period of six months, an unprecedented crisis developed in the history of the Congress over the Congress Presidentship which ranged the Sardar and the Panditji on opposite sides—a conflict which, despite his best efforts, Rajaji failed to prevent.

As Home Minister, Rajaji was a host in himself and the outstanding performance of his that stands vividly in my memory is the heroic fight he put up to get Preventive Detention Bill through Parliament. It was a saga of sustained effort over well-nigh two weeks, in which his clarity of mind, his intellectual grasp of intricacies of arguments, his mastery of facts, his incisiveness and his debating skill, reminiscent of the battle between the 'no-changers' and the Swarajists of the early twenties were fully to the fore. But the hour of parting was not far and in December 1951 he resigned and returned to Madras where he was to head, in dramatic circumstances, the Congress Party in the legislature and again assume the Chief Ministership of the State.

Once, early in 1953, when I was in Madras, I went to Rajaji to pay my respects to him. He was immersed in files. He called me in. His Private Secretary happened to come in and Rajaji introduced him to me saying: "He is doing for me what you used to do for Sardar; only he does not tread on anybody's corns!" We then talked of the good old days and after a while I took leave of him.

Rajaji's differences with Pandit Nehru had their roots in the past and covered certain basic attitudes. When they persisted and the rift became pronounced, Rajaji had no alternative but to part



company with Pandit Nehru on ideological grounds. Developments since then are matters of recent history.

Rajaji, in opposition, has not only been a leader of his own party, namely, the Swatantra Party, but has also been a guide, friend and philosopher to the entire Opposition. The moral position he takes up, and the practical outlook which underlies his pronouncements, make an appeal not only to the Opposition but to all those in the country who have the will to study, the mind to think and the inclination to take a positive and well-considered view on the problems that affect the country. His versatility and clarity of mind, even with advancing years, have been miraculous. Quite often he sees much more than others and provides arguments which give not only intellectual support but also logical strength to the case against Government policies or decisions. He has always championed liberty, fundamental rights, the rule of law and social justice so far as they are consistent with the interests of the country. Patriotism to him is, as was the case with Sardar Patel, an article of faith.

Whenever I have discussed any public issue with him, not only have I found crispness of arguments but also an uncompromising regard for what was best from the country's point of view. He judges all questions on merits based on the interests of the country. He never stoops low but always stands on a high pedestal and deals with problems of political organizations on a high plane ; his sagacity and his mature wisdom always provide invaluable guidance. The high moral purpose and intellectual objectivity which lend to his utterances an authority and charm are unmatched in our political life. I am not surprised that often he stands alone amongst the leaders of the country in taking that line. Throughout his career as a leader, or as a Minister, or Chief Minister, he has himself set a high standard of rectitude and impartiality.

I can recall many instances in which if we had followed his advice we would never have come to grief; but it will be profitless to place them before committed politicians. Those who work on misconceived ideology and wrong type of idealism divorced from realism are now setting standards which are not conducive to democratic growth and orderly attainment of our cherished objectives.

In the midst of such an atmosphere it is encouraging to find an old man of 93, frail in health but fresh in mind, speaking to us in the true voice of religion and politics, with almost Socratic perfection and Aristotelian nobility of thought. His contribution to religious thought is by itself monumental. His *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and his critique on the Upanishads are a treat not only for their simplicity but also for their scholarship.

Rajaji's unique contribution lies in that he remains a lone crusader for human rights, human values, morality in public life and the best that was in the past and the best that is in the present and the lone beacon light of hope and faith for those who stand for these permanent principles of civilized existence.



## The Shining Light of Wisdom

At four-score and thirteen Rajaji today stands forth as shining beacon light in a raging storm, an embodiment of the values on which our non-violent struggle for freedom, launched by Gandhiji, was built and which alone can make that Independence bear the promised fruit. These consist of truth, honesty and sincerity in all walks of life—including the political—renunciation, self-sacrifice and spotless personal purity.

Rajaji has always put service before self. Not even his worst opponent has ever attributed to him any lapse from the strict ethical standards in the political field that he has exemplified in his personal life. Considerations of self-advancement, personal power, or glory have never touched him. His sole ambition has been to serve his country according to the best of his light, by means as pure and spotless as the end. Whether as a member of the Interim Government or as Governor of Bengal, as Chief Minister of his home Province or as Governor-General of India, he has adorned whatever high office he has held rather than shone in its reflected glory. A dauntless warrior in the non-violent struggle for Independence, he has proved his mettle as an administrator and constructive statesman under Independence no less. His is a rounded personality in which the soldier's courage and the statesman's wisdom are blended in a rare harmony with the refinement of a deep culture and profound scholarship. These he wears with an ineffable lightness and grace. To be in his company is a rare pleasure and privilege.

Who does not know Rajaji's forensic skill, matchless wit and humour, and gift of repartee, razor sharp analytical mind, crystal-clear expression and withering sarcasm that make him so formidable in debate? I have never seen him unnerved by any amount of heckling. The more he is heckled the more he shines forth. In quick



thrust and parry he has no equal. Once in an argument over the removal of untouchability, in the All India Congress Committee, someone challenged him. "Must we ..would you have us touch every scavenger in filthy clothes ? Would you do it yourself ?" he asked, thinking he had scored a hit. Quick as lightning came the reply : "I would not mind touching even you, my friend. But that does not mean that I must stop to touch every scavenger that passes by !" If by chance he is caught unprepared, he will wait for his opportunity to come out even; he will never let anyone get away with it.

Once I had an exquisite experience of this. He had mentioned to me a very long South Indian name with three-letter initials, indicating the place of birth, father's name, caste, etc, of the person concerned, as it is common in the South, eg, KAS Subramaniam (Kaveripatnam Appaswamy Shankara Subramaniam). "Let me call a stenographer." I quipped, as he began to spell it out in full. Ignoring my remark he quietly changed the topic. After a little while he asked innocently: "What is Hakim Saheb's name ?" "Hakim Ajmal Khan," I replied. "What's the matter ?" "No," he persisted, "how do they refer to him in public meetings ?" It used to be customary in those early non-cooperation days in the Punjab to confer elaborate honorific popular titles on national leaders. Hakim Ajmal Khan had been exalted as "Masih-ul-Mulk, Hazak-ul-Hakim, Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb." The moment I began, Rajaji sprang to the kill for which he had long been waiting. "Stop, let me call a stenographer," he cut in, with a grin and a twinkle !

Rajaji's differences with Gandhiji on some of the political issues during the latter part of India's non-violent struggle for Independence made not the slightest difference in their mutual love and esteem. The bond that united them was the bond of truth and single-minded dedication to the service of the motherland. Gandhiji had no use for imitation or mechanical conformity ; he wanted everybody to be true to his light and act accordingly in scorn of consequence. He learnt more from people who honestly disagreed with him, he often used to say, than from those who merely endorsed whatever he said. There were very few people with whom he loved to check up his conclusions or compare notes more than with Rajaji. In fact, it was Gandhiji's firm view that if people did not, or would

not, go his way, then Rajaji's was the correct way for them, and on one occasion he actually egged on Rajaji to press his viewpoint with the utmost vigour against that of his (Gandhiji's) Congress colleagues.

Rajaji's indefatigable industry, intellectual vigour, brilliance and balanced judgment, that seem to show no touch of old age or decay, are as much the fruit of his inherited talent as they are of his abstemious self-disciplined life. Coupled with his self-sacrifice, renunciation and utter dedication to the ideal of service, they constitute an asset that our younger generation might well treasure and emulate.



## As Governor-General of India

When Prof Kapitsa, the great scientist, reached the age of 75 and his friends celebrated his birthday, he said that a man's life, assuming it to be a hundred years, can be divided into four parts. During the first 25 years, he is largely a creature of impulse. During the next 25, there is a constant struggle between his animal impulses and his social instincts. During the third quarter, the latter prevails, and it is then that he renders some service to society in whatever field he has chosen. In the last 25 years, he is treated as a god and is of no use to anybody.

Evidently, Prof. Kapitsa thinks that old age is at once sublime, ridiculous, awe-inspiring and pathetic. None of these epithets, however, will fit Rajaji who will soon complete his 93rd year. He has not become a god, nor can it be said that he is of no use to anyone. In his case old age is a continuation of youth. At 93 his mind is as youthful and vigorous as it was when he was 43.

I must confess that I have no special qualification to write about Rajaji. I have not had the privilege of knowing him intimately, nor, except for a brief period, was I in touch with him. In fact, the only political leader whom I can claim to have known well was Jawaharlal Nehru. With him I worked in close touch when I was Foreign Secretary. Earlier, when I was in China, and later when I was in Russia for nine years, I came to know the working of the mind through correspondence, official, demi-official and personal. It is well-known that he and Rajaji did not see eye to eye with each other on some important matters. If there were to be a debate on Rajaji *versus* Nehru, the reader can imagine whose side I will take, but this does not detract from my respect, admiration and, if I may say so, affection for Rajaji.

It was only when Rajaji was Governor-General of India (1948-1950) that I was in constant touch with him. I was then Foreign Secretary. Those were the days when foreign governments vied with



one another to establish diplomatic relations, and exchange diplomatic missions, with newly independent India. It was my duty to accompany the new ambassadors to Rajaji, assist at the presentation of their credentials to him and stay to lunch with him and his gracious daughter, Smt Namagiri. All the heads of missions were not only impressed with, but almost overcome by, Rajaji's charm. This was the more surprising, because his predecessor and the last British Governor-General of India Lord Mountbatten, and his wife were known as perfect charmers; indeed they may be said to have charmed India into the acceptance of partition. Rajaji almost eclipsed them in the quality of grace.

The secret of Rajaji's appeal was that he was entirely true to himself. The governor-generalship sat lightly on his shoulders. The contrast between him and his diplomatic guests was startling. They would be dressed up in uniforms, with gold braids, medals and decorations; and he would be in his *dhoti* and shirt, spotlessly white and clean. Rajaji, as it were, stripped the diplomatic guests of their uniforms and saw right through them, without causing them the slightest embarrassment. He treated each of them not as His Excellency the Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary for X, Y or Z, but simply as a human being. With his delightful impishness, combined with piercing acumen, he established a personal relationship with them. And they responded warmly to this treatment. They felt they were not in the presence of the Governor-General of India but a nice, wise old man who had somehow strayed into the Governor-General's throne.

In his relations with the diplomatic corps Rajaji was very different from Rajen Babu who succeeded him as Head of State. Rajen Babu was frankly bored with diplomats and their chattering wives. Once, when the table plan of a luncheon at Rashtrapati Bhavan in honour of a new Ambassador was shown to Rajen Babu, he noticed that the Ambassador's wife had been placed next to him. "Must this woman be seated next to me?" asked Rajen Babu, "Can't Mrs Menon sit next to me?" It was explained to Rajen Babu that would be a serious breach of protocol and that the Ambassador's wife had precedence over all other guests. Unlike Rajen Babu,



Rajaji revelled, or gave the appearance of revelling, in the company of diplomats and their womenfolk.

Rajaji had a knack of gently pulling people's legs. When Garin, the new Portuguese Minister, was introduced to him, Rajaji greeted him by saying: "You are the handsomest diplomat I have met. Isn't your wife jealous of you?" And whenever he saw him, he would say: "Here's the handsomest diplomat in Delhi!"

The mention of Portugal reminds me of a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Cabinet to consider the problem of Goa, which Portugal continued to regard as part of its territory. A number of Secretaries to the Government of India including myself were present. Various suggestions were made for putting pressure on Portugal, such as the imposition of curbs on travel to and from Goa, discouragement of the employment of Goans in India and the placing of difficulties in the way of remittance to Goa. Rajaji, who was Minister in the Cabinet then, did not like the idea of administering pinpricks: after all, he said, the Goans were our brethren and we must win them over by love. Sardar Patel, who seemed almost asleep when the rambling discussion was going on, suddenly woke up and said: "Why shouldn't we go in? It's two hours' work." Nehru objected to this suggestion strongly; it would amount to an invasion and India would lose her reputation for non-violence. Eventually, after fifteen years of patient waiting, we did go into Goa. It was, as Sardar Patel had predicted, little more than two hours' work.

Once, when Rajaji was Home Minister, he sent for me for a talk on Tibet. He was indignant at the Chinese incursion into Tibet and argued forcibly that we should not recognize Chinese sovereignty or even suzerainty over Tibet. Subsequent events proved him right. Whether we ourselves have not unwittingly contributed to the deterioration of our relations with China, which must of course bear the primary responsibility for it, is another matter.

As Governor-General, Rajaji made no distinction between the diplomats of countries with which we had close historical relations and of countries behind the so-called Iron Curtain. He went out of his way to cultivate Mr Novikov, the first Soviet Ambassador to India. He noticed that Mr Novikov was not present at the cere-

mony at which he was installed Governor-General of India in the presence of all other heads of missions. Novikov's absence was designed to show that the Soviet Government at that time laid no store by the replacement of a British by an Indian Governor-General and that they looked askance at India's decision to remain in the Commonwealth—an attitude which changed conspicuously a few years later when the Soviet Government realized that India would not allow her membership of the Commonwealth to affect her freedom of action in any way.

When Rajaji met Mr Novikov some days later he said casually: "I did not see you at my installation ceremony." Mr Novikov hummed and hawed and said: "Oh! It was so hot (it was the month of June), too hot for me to put on my uniform." "That," said Rajaji, "is why you should dress in our climate as I do. Shall I send you a loin-cloth and shirt?" I do not know whether Rajaji sent these to Novikov, but he did send a piece of Khaddar cloth to Brackenbery, his Chief Secretary, when he became the Prime Minister of Madras in 1937 and Brackenbery made a suit out of it and wore it with pride. Members of the ICS and other services, British as well as Indian, who had the privilege of serving under Rajaji had the highest admiration and respect for him.

Others will doubtless write about Rajaji's remarkable versatility, the majesty of his intellect and the subtlety of his mind, qualities which have given him a unique place in the political life of this country and taken him to places of such eminence as Chief Minister of Madras, Home Minister in the Central Government, Governor of Bengal and Governor-General of India. But what endeared him to me during the brief period of my acquaintance with him was his almost childlike simplicity concealing considerable sophistication, his warm humanity and his irresistible humour.



## Recalling His Greatness

What were the characteristics which would make Rajaji an immortal in the history of India, and in a sense also an immortal in the history of the world ? Because, even while he was concerned with the problems of India he was also profoundly concerned with the problems of mankind. There was no voice in India which rang out clearer and more strident in the world against nuclear weapons than the voice of Rajagopalachariar. When as the Secretary of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, I was organizing the Anti-Nuclear Arms Convention in Delhi, no one strengthened me and inspired me more than Rajaji. And when finally the Gandhi Peace Foundation sent two delegations—one to Moscow and one to Washington—the delegation to Washington went with Rajaji as its real leader. Rajaji and Diwakarji and B Shiva Rao went to Washington. Shri Dhebar and I went to Moscow. We kept in touch with each other at the two ends of the world. And when Rajaji was speaking to President Kennedy, we were talking to Prime Minister Khrushchev. This is all I would recall now in regard to this international event. Let me pass on to other matters

After Rajaji returned to India, President Kennedy wrote a letter to a person of great importance in this country and in that letter, President Kennedy said: "I have seldom met a man who had a more civilizing influence on me than Rajaji." Let us remember that Kennedy was himself one of the great men of history, and he knew what he was saying. That Rajaji had a profoundly civilizing influence on him is the greatest tribute probably Kennedy had paid to any man. I am bringing this into the picture in order to clear the ground for us to understand that Rajaji who lived in a small mud-hut in a small village was not merely a Tamilian, was not merely an Indian but was in every sense and in the highest sense, a citizen of the world. Gandhiji inspired me, but the man who trained me in public somehow, with great difficulty to manage the



work of the extremely difficult task of the Chairman of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, it is entirely because of the training that Rajaji gave me. While his mind could go to the mountain top, he took minute care of the smallest details. Sitting in his little hut, he would write many letters a day. And by the time the postal hour arrived there would be a big bundle of letters. But no letter went to the post office even after it was gummed and stamped without Rajaji taking one look at the cover and the address. If in pasting a letter a little edge was left unpasted, he would get the gum and paste it and then throw it into the despatch box. And the stamp must be at the right hand corner! If it was moved a little he would ask as to who had done it. Imagine Rajaji attending to details like this. This lesson not only I but every single person who came in touch with him learned from him: not merely to think of big things but also to take care of the little things so that you may not ultimately lose the big things. The late Shri Jamnalal Bajaj, Gandhiji's right hand man in Wardha, once said of Rajaji: "The man is yet to be born who can deceive Rajaji." Let me tell you it was not difficult to deceive Gandhiji. He trusted everybody; believed in the spoken word of everybody and accepted the credentials of people at their face value which Rajaji would not have always accepted. That was Gandhiji's greatness; and this was Rajaji's greatness. I have known people meeting him. How often have I not seen him talking to people and people talking to him? In a moment, a light will come into his eyes. And through the dark glasses his mental apparatus will be probing into the talking man. He sized up the man and yet he would not say one angry word or one offensive word. But when that marvellous cynical smile of his appeared, he would say a word or two which would annihilate the pretensions of the other man. He was a great student of the human mind and human character.

No political leader in India in all the times through which we have lived was a man of such many-sided genius as Rajaji. You can remember Lala Lajpat Raj, the Lion of Punjab, or Chittaranjan Das of Bengal or Motilal Nehru etc. They were all great in one or two things; and probably in one or two things they were greater than Rajaji. But in the magnificent many-sidedness of his genius, there



was none who was the equal of Rajaji. He was one of the greatest figures in the Literary Renaissance of India. Probably no author in India has written books, sold in larger number and read by more people than Rajaji. *Chakravarti Thirumahan* and *Vyasar Virudhu* and other books sold like hot cakes. Hundreds of thousands of copies were sold. This can make any other literary author in India jealous. As a man of the Literary Renaissance in Tamil, his immortality is utterly assured. Even when Rajaji's politics may be forgotten, his literary greatness will be remembered by grateful generations for centuries to come. About which other political leader in India, can we say he would be more immortal as a man of letters than as a man of politics except only Pandit Nehru?

The second point I would stress is that Rajaji was always a controversial figure. Rajaji was continually at the centre of controversies. Some people think that Rajaji was a great *sisya* of Gandhiji who said "yes" "yes" to him. Not even Jawaharlal Nehru differed from Gandhiji more often and more vigorously than Rajaji who was at the same time utterly devoted to Gandhiji. How did he combine the deepest devotion with the absolute freedom of dissent? There can be only one reason: that Rajaji was in his own way as great as Gandhiji. Only an equally great man can give devotion and criticism at the same time. I remember one controversy. This was about Mohammad Ali Jinnah and his demand for Pakistan. Long before Gandhi, Nehru and Sardar realized that Pakistan had become inevitable, Rajaji saw this with unerring instinct. And when he said that we may have to accept Pakistan, all of us were angry with him. The great Acharaya Kripalani said that 'Rajaji had stabbed Indians in the back'. But strangely the backs turned and the chests came forward and were stabbed by reality. No one had understood the Hindu-Muslim problem better than Rajaji. And when this controversy was raging and when he courageously addressed public meetings, stones and rotten eggs came his way. But he never yielded for a moment. Finally, the whole country came around. Now the strangest thing is that in a controversy, there would be enemies and friends. But as this controversy deepened, enemies and friends equally loved and respected Rajaji.



In later years, during the last few recent years through which we have lived, he was again in the midst of vital controversies. Governor Shah differed from him. Even a small person like me differed from him. But even in the midst of differences of opinion, both the Governor and Ramachandran looked at Rajaji and said everytime that here was one of the greatest men of our time. The more we differed, the more we respected and loved him. This has not happened in the case of most other leaders. Any man lesser than Rajaji would have been ground into the dust by opponents. But out of every controversy he emerged with a greater stature.

As I mentioned earlier, the late Shri Jamnalal had said that no one could deceive Rajaji. This does not mean that he was a hard-hearted man. On the contrary, his mind was full of gentleness and full of tenderness. Some people saw only the steel, and some people only the rose, but some of us saw both the steel and the rose. In this was our greatest privilege and good fortune.

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His personality symbolized the strength of steel and the softness of the rose petal in a unique combination.

Now he is gone—physically gone. But his immortality in the history of India and in a measure in the history of the world is assured. He had his faults like every great man might have. But as the tides of time roll on and the winds of change blow, all these little things would be forgotten and he would stand out like the Himalayas in the history of our time.

I lived with him in Gandhi Ashram for four years. He lived a life of austere simplicity, and that without the slightest ostentation. There are some people who live a very simple life with much ostentation. But his simplicity was part of his culture. He believed that a simple life was necessary for rising to the greatest level in character and achievement. This Ashram he founded is growing from strength to strength. The Ashram is the 'Gangotri' of Khadi in South India. It is out of this place that great 'pravaha' of Khadi arose.

This is also the Gangotri of prohibition. Nehru called Rajaji "the Father of Prohibition Movement." Prohibition has no politics at all. It is for the welfare of the poorest men and women in India. Prohi-

bition represents the challenge of the poorest and the lowliest to live with honour. They too claim the right to live and thrive and prosper. Prohibition disappeared suddenly. Prohibition has come back suddenly. No one can run a Government in Madras and make the Government stable, if they throw prohibition away. Tamil Nadu will never allow and India will never allow this institution to fall behind or falter.

And my last word is that even this institution, growing and developing, is not a full or adequate memorial to Rajaji. If we build a memorial to each one item of his greatness, it would be a mighty task. So, let us at least remember him, remember him with reverence and profound love and as we so remember him and cherish his memory, may we also gather into our own life a little ray of the manifold greatness of which he was the embodiment.



## Concern for Human Welfare

It is difficult for me to write in brief about Rajaji. Many and varied are the aspects of his life and work of which I have intimate knowledge through personal contact with him. I have known many more aspects from his writings and actions and from others who have come in closer contact with him.

To vegetate is not to live. Vital living alone is living. There is a Sanskrit saying, 'even a crow lives for a hundred years feeding on sacrificial rice'. That is not living. Bertrand Russell lived beyond ninety and it was an alert life, full of awareness of what was going on. Rajaji is not only alert and thinking vigorously and reacting to world events and events in India, but keeps on expressing himself from week to week in incisive, precise and faultless English. I do not know much of Tamil and am not following what he must be writing in a homely style in that tongue which is his own. I know that he is a great writer and a story teller in Tamil, as well as in English. He writes on many subjects including religion and philosophy. His *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* brought out by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan of Bombay have sold in tens of thousands and have been translated into many languages.

Some might say that Rajaji has ceased to act. That is a wrong way of assessing him. Not long ago he founded the Swatantra Party and he continues to be its guardian angel. Apart from that, writing itself is action. May I refer to Jean Paul Sartre, the great Existentialist philosopher? He called his autobiography, *Words*. He says writing is action, action in self-discovery. And after all, what remains and is more permanent and practically immortal is not action but the word, the writing. Even 'action', if it is to live, can live only in the form of history, written in words. What Buddha did and Christ did is known to us only because it has come down to us in the form of words either by word of mouth or in writing.



There can be another kind of action. Vinoba at 76 has ceased to write and speaks very sparingly, only two hours a day. But he meditates, thinks, applies his mind to problems. He is busy in his mind with 'God Immanent.' So, I have recently written about him saying, in his case, 'Meditation is Action.' Science is now at pains to prove that the subtler the matter, the more powerful it is. We all know the adage 'speech is silver, but silence is golden.' *Samadhi* is not sleep but intense concentration of our consciousness.

Rajaji is very familiar with Bangalore and he knows Kannada to some extent. He sometimes bursts out in Kannada with me. He once mentioned to me about Kadugudi, a village about 12 miles from Bangalore which is now called 'Whitefield', because it is an Anglo-Indian colony. He was a student of the Centenarian Central College of Bangalore. In recent times he visited my office in Bangalore. I showed him our publications. Among them, *Kasturi*, the Kannada Monthly Digest, attracted his attention. He immediately pointed out to his friend who had accompanied him that Tamil had no monthly so neatly printed and with such varied worthwhile stuff. Looking at a copy of *Samyukta Karnatak* daily, he said, you should call it only 'Karnataka' because it is already 'Samyukta', that is, united. He made another suggestion regarding the weekly supplement of our daily. We were calling it 'Puravani' supplement. He said you can call it 'Manjari'. We have adopted it.

Rajaji seems to have some affection for me and when he wants to rebuke me, he strikes with a blunt sword. When I went to him to tell him about Gandhi Centenary, he simply said: "You seem to be a brave man." He wanted the Gandhi Peace Foundation two years ago to lead a deputation to France to plead with the French Government not to go on with nuclear tests in the Pacific.

This brings me to the memorable delegation which the Gandhi Peace Foundation led to the US and Britain, as well as to Russia in 1962 against nuclear tests. The US President, JF Kennedy, received us with great respect and cordiality. Instead of only 20 minutes which were scheduled, he spent 75 minutes with us. It was a very informal but intensely serious conversation and Kennedy seemed to be touched by Rajaji's way of putting the problem of

stopping radiation injury to the whole of humanity on a high level. We were told later that Kennedy had remarked that the talk had a civilizing quality about it.

Kennedy's reception to us set the pace. But Rajaji, after talks with the officer-in-charge of what is called the Disarmament Agency, quietly remarked that it was the Armament Agency, as it looked at everything from the point of view of National Security !

Rajaji in his eventful career has filled almost all great offices. Twice he was Chief Minister of his home State, he was Governor of Bengal, he was the first and last Indian Governor-General, he was also Home Minister in the Central Cabinet. But all these offices never changed him, so far as his simplicity, directness of approach, and keen interest in everything of human importance are concerned. His integrity is of the highest order and he is as fearless as his convictions are bold. His logic is merciless and he pursues it to its bitter end. His mastery over English language is next only to his mastery over logical thinking. Everything else about him may perhaps be gradually forgotten but what he has contributed to India and is contributing even now in no small measure, in the form of devotion to public causes, ceaseless striving to raise the level of human behaviour, frank and fearless exposure of what he feels is against the interests of the people, and above all, in the form of his writings both in English and Tamil, will ever continue to inspire and guide millions here and abroad.



## The One and Only Rajaji

Years have passed since our beloved and revered Rajaji left us, orphaned. When I think of him, my thoughts go back to five decades—to that glorious, momentous era of our history when Mahatma Gandhi rose on our political horizon, heralding the dawn of the historic fight for freedom which he led. In the first sweep of Gandhiji's non-cooperation movement many a great son of India was carried into the vortex of the fight. Towering above all, in the earliest legion of Gandhiji, was a frail lawyer, with dark glasses; casting away a lucrative practice at the bar, C Rajagopalachariar chose the harder path of service and sacrifice and joined the non-cooperation movement. He had come to Madras from Salem for changing the venue of his profession to a larger field, when the tide of Gandhiji's movement swept him away. Gandhiji discovered Rajagopalachari—rather Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji's Secretary and close companion, discovered him for Gandhiji. Gandhiji at once took him into his fold and the two great magnetic personalities attracted each other. From then on Rajagopalachari became a devout follower, a close associate and a trusted lieutenant of Gandhiji. Gandhiji was struck by Rajaji's intellectual calibre, deep insight and profound wisdom, that he called him his brain trust and conscience keeper. While Rajaji, in his implicit faith in Gandhiji, followed him as a devout disciple, Gandhiji adopted him as his wise counsellor, in whose judgement and words he placed absolute trust. Thus began a lifelong *Guru-Sishya* partnership, which lasted throughout their lives.

My first contact with Rajaji was in the later twenties and early thirties. At the beginning, like other young Congress workers, I had a distant awe for him. Later, when we were brought closer, during the non-cooperation and succeeding movements led by Gandhiji, my awe turned into admiration and respect towards him. I found him a giant towering above others, with his keen intellect and sharp wit and

deep wisdom. To many of us of the younger generation who were easily moved with emotion and spirit, his cold intellect was indeed often unintelligible and even annoying. But when one moved close to him, his disarming wit and charming conversation and incisive logic dispelled all suspicions and fear and won everybody. This was the real Rajaji—not the cold forbidding intellectual. Later on, I was in the unenviable position of having to be on the opposite side and we differed often radically in our views in politics. But that never lessened my deep regard for him, nor his affection for me. Both Rajaji and I kept politics apart from our personal relationship. There were occasions, unfortunately, when we stood poles apart, but our hearts retained the same warmth for each other.

What compelled my great admiration and adoration for him was his impeccable character. He was never swayed by any consideration, personal or other, in maintaining strict integrity in public life, and utter simplicity and purity in personal life. To him honesty and truth were above everything else. He would not tolerate dishonesty and gave no quarter for favouritism of any kind—personal or official. He never allowed himself to be influenced while in power. He set a high standard of administration and his capacity to instil that standard in others was irresistible.

He was least affected by personal considerations and never did anything to favour his friends and followers, not to mention his own kith and kin. He was the rare specimen who left his own family where it was, even when he held the highest posts.

He never aspired for power nor for personal advancement. Even in the early years when he enjoyed the confidence of Mahatma Gandhi, he refused the honour of Congress presidentship; even Gandhiji himself could not persuade him to accept it. When the new constitution was introduced he was the first and last Indian Governor-General, and top leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel wanted him to become the first President of India. But when Babu Rajendra Prasad's name was mooted by another group of Congressmen, Rajaji declined firmly to be nominated for election for presidentship, as he did not wish to contest against his dear colleague in the Congress.



But when the call of duty came, he was the last person to stand on any prestige or false dignity and he would immediately respond to the call. After he relinquished the Governor-Generalship and retired in Madras, the call came from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to take up a Ministership in his cabinet. Any other person in Rajaji's position would have considered it *infra dig* to take up a mere Ministership after having held the highest post in the land. But Rajaji was imbued with a sense of duty and he readily responded and became a Minister without portfolio and later Home Minister in Nehru Cabinet.

Rajaji commanded respect at every level from the highest to the lowest. At the advent of Independence, when Lord Mountbatten relinquished office, Rajaji was considered as the fittest person to become the first Indian Governor-General. Rajaji proved that it was the post. He won the hearts of everyone around. Lord Mountbatten, his predecessor, became one of his greatest admirers. The foreign dignitaries, including the Russian Ambassador and others were won over by his charming manners, high intellect and great understanding.

During the entire term of Rajaji's office as Governor-General, Pandit Jawaharlal constantly sought his advice on many intricate matters of State and there were several occasions when he rushed to Rajaji for help to solve some of the troublesome problems he had to face. Rajaji, with his great acumen and human understanding, was able to iron out, on many occasions, serious differences between Pandit Nehru and his colleagues, particularly Sardar Patel.

When Rajaji relinquished his office as Governor-General, Pandit Nehru tried his best to keep him in Delhi near him in some high capacity. But when Rajaji chose oblivion in his home State, Pandit Jawaharlal could not contain his emotion and almost choked with feeling at the parting.

Wherever he was, whatever he was doing, Rajaji had only the good of the people in his mind. He defied orthodoxy when, as Chair man of Salem Municipality, he gave Harijan employees equality with other castes in the matter of entering the *agraharam* to do their work in the teeth of orthodox opposition. Again when he became



Premier of Madras Province in 1937, one of the first acts he did boldly was to enable temple-entry by Harijans by enacting a law removing the disability.

In those days, even with the limited powers that were given to Provincial governments, Rajaji boldly introduced legislation for debt relief, especially to the farmers. In those days this was considered a revolutionary measure. Rajaji, who was a conservative by temperament, was very revolutionary when it came to action for the amelioration of the masses.

From earliest days, even before Gandhiji and the Congress adopted Prohibition as a programme, Rajaji was engaged actively in propagating the eradication of the drink evil. He campaigned for Prohibition from the Gandhi Ashram, which he had set up; he was an expert campaigner, carrying the message to the masses through telling picture posters, exhibitions and demonstrations. He also started a paper called 'Vimochanam' in Tamil, to propagate Prohibition. He composed songs to be sung in public and wrote articles and stories in favour of Prohibition. One of the first acts he did, as soon as he became Premier of Madras Province, was to introduce Prohibition. It was his keen intellect that devised the sales tax to compensate for the loss of revenue on account of Prohibition. He called the tax 'Kamadhenu'. When he introduced the tax it was on a very small percentage. But the 'Kamadhenu' had been sucked dry since and the revenue from it is hundred times more and yields much more than the revenue from drink; yet there is a wail that a large chunk of revenue is lost on account of Prohibition.

Rajaji's crusade against the drink evil was not merely on moral grounds. He had seen with his own eyes the miseries brought by drink in the poor families which had been ruined. His heart bled for them. When Prohibition was lifted in Tamil Nadu his heart again bled and it was the greatest blow to him to find that all the good that had been achieved over four decades was destroyed by a stroke of the pen. He never recovered from shock and disappointment which affected Rajaji very much and he felt so frustrated that he lost the great will to live.

Rajaji's earliest and greatest love was Khadi. It was not



merely because Gandhiji had advocated it that he took it up seriously. It was because he was convinced that the Charkha was the only alternative to under-employment and starvation in the villages. In his district especially, where successive droughts had dried up the land and people were starving, the Charkha came as a harbinger of hope. Rajaji set up the Gandhi Ashram in Tiruchengodu in Salem District with a band of dedicated workers and he started rehabilitating the villages around. The activities of the Ashram were mainly devoted to the spreading of spinning in the villages; the other activities, such as anti-drink campaign, removal of untouchability, medical relief etc, were all part of the constructive programme of Gandhiji which Rajaji carried out through the Gandhi Ashram.

Though he was recognized as an astute politician, able administrator and seasoned political fighter, Rajaji's heart was in the constructive programme which was designed to ameliorate the condition of the poor people in the villages.

What has always inspired me is Rajaji's indomitable courage in action, speech and thought. He did not hanker after popularity and many things he did looked as if he was deliberately courting unpopularity. Very often, his utterances caused pain, surprise and shock to his colleagues, including Nehru. Though he never intended deliberately to hurt anybody, he never hesitated to speak out the truth and declare his own beliefs fearlessly. Gandhiji's regard for him became greater for his frankness and fearlessness. In 1942, when the Quit India movement was launched, alone among the leaders Rajaji raised his voice of dissent. Many thought he had turned reactionary and decried his utterances and acts. But he was undaunted. He stuck to what he thought was right and what he believed in. This is what earned him admiration of Gandhiji. Even those who disagreed with him could not but admire him for his adamant courage. Quite often his views and utterances ran directly against the current and popular opinion. But very often ultimately what he had said came true after five or ten years. His words were prophetic.

Rajaji's courage, utter selflessness, absolute sincerity, unalloyed integrity, unstinted sacrifice and impeccable character — these are the

qualities that everyone should emulate, especially the younger generation.

In the last years of his life, it was my great privilege to have come closer to Rajaji than ever before. My admiration, regard and reverence for him rose hundredfold. I understood him much better than before. I found his affection for me (all unexpressed) was unbounded.

The final parting, when it came, was inconsolable.

Where can we find the like of him ever?



## Founder of Parliamentary Life

Sri C Rajagopalachari is an acknowledged leader of our country and a great and wise statesman. It was he who laid the foundations of India's parliamentary life from Madras (in 1937-38). Those were the days when doubts were expressed about the capacity of our people to carry on the work of administration efficiently; when there were others to watch us; not only to watch but to put us down also, if need be. Today, we are in a different position. We are masters in our own house, in our own country. It is for us to make or mar our future. The future of this country depends upon how we behave today, tomorrow and in the near future. It is our great good fortune that a great administrator, a wise statesman and a great patriot is at the helm of our affairs. Some people remark that he is a constitutional Governor-General.

Of course, in a democracy everything is governed by the Constitution. But it is also influenced by the moral force which we have inherited from the great leader who was responsible for freeing us from bondage. Therefore, let there be no mistaking a constitutional Governor-General for a cipher. Sri Rajagopalachari knows how a constitutional Governor-General should behave, he knows yet how to break the limits when appropriate. It is a great honour to have such a Governor-General, the first Indian in our free country, a great man of very high moral stature and great ability.

Some people think that a Governor-General's position is enviable. Rajaji perhaps thinks he felt happier when he was in prison when there were no cares and no burdens. In a prison cell, he might have felt more relieved than in that big palace which continuously oppresses men like him. A man who is used to leading an ascetic life has been compelled to stay in a palace where the walls would oppress him, where the surroundings and the paraphernalia would continuously oppress him; but he has been compelled to accept

that position and he can do it because he is full of humility, full of humour, tact and good sense. He does his duty in a manner which excites the admiration of all our countrymen as well as the foreigners, businessmen and diplomats who come as our guests. Let us hope that he helps and guides this country to stability, so that future generations can say that in a period of crisis the burden was put upon right shoulders.



## Instrument of God

From the standpoint of national welfare, Rajaji is the most important man in India today. Importance is different from power and is measured by the influence that one exercises on the lives and thoughts of others. The British Viceroys in their time were powerful but they have been proved at the bar of history not proportionally important. Mahatma Gandhi who started a campaign of resistance against them, wielded no power when he started it, but he is acclaimed by the whole world as the most important man born in India in recent times. His importance arises from the fact that he performed the feat of liberating his country from foreign rule at a time when it seemed to have no adequate resources. He supplied the strength and the resources with his leadership.

India today is in the throes of a second liberation movement. The freedom that the Mahatma won has not fulfilled its promise of happiness for the people. Two reasons have mainly contributed to the distressing result. First, the leaders of the indigenous government formed after the withdrawal of the British ran after power, and in the process of making themselves more and more powerful, they swallowed up popular liberties one after one relentlessly. Secondly, in the course of consolidating their power they organized mob clamour. Anything that a large number of people could be got together to demand became administrative policy. The pampered covetousness of the multitude, let loose on society with State patronage, made class hatred fashionable and deprived property of its sanctity. To cover up the depredatory character of this policy and to make it look grand, the name socialism was given to it.

Under Nehru's socialism, the people of India as individuals have lost their liberties. Their property and possessions have ceased to have any assured legal validity. An atmosphere of insecurity permeates the land. The Government on the other hand has made itself

more powerful than any previous government had been by drawing unto itself more and more economic power, thereby tightening its stranglehold on the lives and occupations of the people. Existence for citizens is being rendered practically impossible without the favour of the ruling party.

We are now in need of a second liberation movement but the fight for it is complicated by the all-pervasive character of the opponent's power. Just as civil war is more dreadful than war against a foreign enemy, the wresting of individual liberties from a government established within the country is more difficult than the achievement of national freedom from a foreign power. It is to the undying glory of Rajaji that, at a time when Congress rule had come to be accepted as invincible and irreplaceable, and people had lost all hope of ever being saved from its communistic regimentation and oppression, he came forward to essay this supremely difficult and seemingly impossible task.

The Swatantra movement of Rajaji is thus the lineal successor of the Mahatma's movement in the cause of freedom. The odds against Rajaji seem tremendous at the moment. So they were against the Mahatma when he embarked on his apparently foolhardy Quit India movement. The ordinary pattern of leadership is built on a psychology of expectancy in the human pursuit of power and prosperity. The successful leader has to distribute favours to his followers at the moment of success as its penalty, and these favourites not only corrupt the administration with their interference, but the privileges they enjoy also serve as a constant temptation to one and all to improve their fortunes by copying them in rallying round the leader. This type of leadership is mainly in the nature of a commercial transaction. It flourishes on votes that are in many cases secured in return for some profit.

If Rajaji's movement had depended on this sort of leadership, it certainly could not have hoped for success, as its power of purchasing support is practically nil compared to that of the Congress rulers. It is the unique distinction of Rajaji as a leader that he offers no personal gain to any follower in exchange for his loyalty. From the Prime Minister downwards, Congress leaders when they rise to



power reward their followers, friends and relatives with rich plums in various forms. This was their strength, as it bound large number of acquisitive fortune-seekers to their standards with the secure bond of self-interest. Such nepotism is conspicuously absent in Rajaji's record as political leader and administrator. There has not been a single instance of administrative or other favour conferred by Rajaji out of domestic affection or clannish partiality or as undeserved reward for political allegiance. Those who rally round the Swatantra Party in the expectation of personal advantage through its success are therefore foredoomed to disappointment.

This is the true significance of the Swatantra movement. The leader expects all who join it to discard self-interest in their politics, and to impel them to do so, his own life is exemplary and dynamic. With the resources of character in the country, Rajaji seeks to combat the ramified enslavements of organized greed and power emanating from an exceedingly selfish and self-centred ruling set. Here we have the actual political content of renovated *Dharma*. To believe that character is more important for the nation's welfare than cunning bidding for votes, and that *Dharma* and purity of mind will lead to people's happiness and not covetous grabbing at others' property is to realize the true significance of the Swatantra movement initiated by Rajaji. *Dharma* means a fair deal to all, administrative justice, treating others as one would like to be treated by them and it is the only potent solvent capable of ridding the people of the corruption, waste and nepotism, apart from the aggressions on the community of the rulers' greedy quest for power, rampant in the present set-up of the movement.

*Dharma* is not like propaganda which has two faces, reality and make-believe. The margin between reality and make-believe is occupied by falsehood in propaganda. There is no scope for such falsehood in *Dharma*. It is by prescription something that cannot cheat. Truth and *Dharma* go together and all religions teach that there is no greater power than *Dharma* based on truth. But the teaching of *Dharma* cannot be done by all and sundry. It needs a leader whose life is cast in the resplendent mould of *Dharmic* example from which all false values, pettiness and self-seeking have been burnt

out. Such a leader of flaming probity is Rajaji. The historic role of saving our democracy from the perversions imposed on it by the false disciples of the Mahatma has fallen on him by divine dispensation. Rajaji is an instrument of God, doing God's work.



## Rajaji As I Knew Him

I knew Rajaji for the last fifty-two years from the time he came in contact with Gandhiji and joined the Satyagraha movement. He had just shifted from his native town of Salem and established himself as an advocate in the Madras High Court. He was a rising lawyer, who, if he had continued in the profession, would have been a great advocate and a jurist. But the loss to the legal profession was an invaluable gain to the nation.

We were afterwards colleagues in the Working Committee for years. Whenever the committee met in Allahabad, though the arrangements were made for the stay of Rajaji and Vallabhbhai at Anand Bhavan, they preferred to stay with me in Swaraj Bhavan. These two great men had a high opinion of Sucheta's abilities.

Rajaji, before he took part in the Satyagraha movement, was in politics a follower of Tilak. He was an extremist, the ultraradical of these days. But his main activity there was in the social field. Though born in an orthodox Brahmin family, he did not believe in untouchability of the caste system. He also did not observe the rites and ceremonies of the Hindu religion.

The first mark he made as a fine debater was at the Congress session in Gaya in 1922, presided over by Chittaranjan Das. The old leadership, Das, Motilal and Vithalbhai, stood for change in the Congress programme laid down by Gandhiji, in favour of council-entry, as against Sardar, Rajendra Babu and myself who stood for no change. Jawaharlal Nehru had not made up his mind yet. Our spokesman at Gaya was Rajaji. We carried the day. Chittaranjan Das was constrained to resign as the President of the Congress.

After his first brilliant performance, there have been ups and downs in the political life of Rajaji. When in 1924 Gandhiji was released from jail on account of his illness, he put an end to the

controversy between the pro-changers and the no-changers. Rajaji then took to constructive work and organized khadi and village work and lived in an Ashram.

Rajaji's first setback in the Congress was when he said that the Congress must recognize Pakistan in principle. This was greatly misunderstood at the time. What Rajaji meant came out clearly, when in 1943, after he was released, Gandhiji met Jinnah at the instance of Rajaji. At the very first meeting when Gandhiji mentioned Rajaji's name, Jinnah denounced him in such terms that, as Gandhiji said afterwards, he felt like abandoning the talks with Jinnah. Jinnah understood the meaning of Rajaji, about the acceptance of Pakistan in theory by the Congress, better than his critics in the Congress. His idea as proposed by Gandhiji was rejected by Jinnah.

The second occasion when he differed from his colleagues of the Congress was at the time of the "Quit India" movement. He stood for co-operation with the foreign Government to defeat Hitler's Germany.

But the differences he had with Gandhiji and his colleagues of the Working Committee did not make any change in the high opinion about Rajaji's great qualities of the head and the heart. Gandhiji once called him his 'Conscience-keeper'. It was, therefore, not surprising that as soon as India's freedom was in the offing, Rajaji was called to be the Governor of Bengal and little afterwards to be the first Governor-General of free India, during the course of the interim Government. Jawaharlal wanted him to be the first Rashtrapati of free India. But that was not to be. The choice of the people for the highest position in the state fell upon another great patriot and man of learning, Rajendra Babu. Afterwards Jawaharlal called him to join the Central Cabinet as Minister without portfolio, and after the death of Sardar, as the Home Minister. But, however great may have been Jawaharlal's opinion about Rajaji, it was not possible for these two great men to pull on together in the Cabinet for long. Rajaji soon resigned. He never took the public into confidence about the cause of his resignation. But those who knew the two men understood the gulf that divided them. It was in their respective upbringing, character and outlook on life that separated them, whatever their opinion of each other's merits.



Rajaji was chosen as a leader of the Congress Party after the first General Election in free India in 1952 and became the Chief Minister of united Madras. The Congress had failed to secure a majority in the Assembly. Prakasam, the state leader of KMPP, had come to an understanding with the Communist Party to form a coalition government, which commanded a majority in the Assembly. But Congressmen have always been reluctant to part with power. Therefore, the Congress Party in Madras and at the Centre conceived the plan, to ask the Governor not to call the leader of the coalition, but to call Rajaji, the leader of the party which had failed to secure a majority in the Assembly, to form the Government. A pliant Governor, Sri Prakash, obliged the Congress Party, to which he himself belonged. He called Rajaji to form the Government. Rajaji, who had not contested the election, was nominated by the Governor to the upper house as a literary person, as if his literary abilities were discovered then for the first time. As soon as Rajaji took office, he announced that he would dissolve the Assembly if he did not command the majority. Soon there were defections from other parties, and the Congress had the requisite majority. However, Rajaji's Chief Ministership did not last long. Rajaji had accepted to be the Chief Minister on the clear understanding that the Centre would support him. This support was not forthcoming, when Rajaji was obliged to resign on the issue of introducing craft work in primary schools. In this he was right and his opponents were entirely wrong. Rajaji also lost the goodwill of the members of the Assembly, by directing that no legislator should approach the officers, except through the Chief Minister or the Minister concerned. This episode, of the mode of forming a minority, paved the way to defections which in after years have plagued Indian politics and made 'politician' a byword of contempt. It also opened the way for the Governors to exercise their 'discretion' in favour of the ruling party in the formation of ministries.

However, this did not end Rajaji's political career. He always took keen interest in the affairs of his country. At the advanced age of 80, he formed a new party, as he thought that the Congress was not properly handling the affairs of the country and there was a tendency towards the rule of one person, by which the freedom of the citizen and his initiative would be lost. He wanted to call the new



party the Conservative Party of India. But his companions thought that the word "Conservative" would denote in these days "reaction" in the public mind. The new party was, therefore, called the Swatantra Party. It stands for democracy, the freedom of the individual and his unfettered initiative. It also stands for "the rule of law" and "the due process of law." Rajaji was liberal in politics, liberal in the best connotation of that term.

Whatever cause Rajaji took up, he brought to it his earnestness, determination and indomitable will. It is true that he often advocated lost causes, as in the case of his scheme of reform in education or Prohibition or opposition to artificial methods of birth control. He was never enthused by sentiments and passions. He was pre-eminently the intellectual. His forensic skill was unmatched. It was always difficult to argue with him. He would overwhelm his opponents not only by logical arguments, but bring to his aid simile, metaphor, fable and anecdote. But by these means, he could not always convince his opponents. In the case of Gandhiji, it was different. He would not try to defeat his opponent in argument but convince him by the clear communication of his stand and his sincere conviction. Unbeatable as Rajaji was in argument, he had also the capacity of reducing his critics to silence by one sentence. Mrs. Gandhi, as the Prime Minister, once criticized Rajaji. His reply was: "I first met Indira at the age of three. It seems she has not grown since."

Rajaji's literary accomplishments were great. He was a prolific writer, not only in his mother-tongue Tamil but also in English. He wrote books on religion, philosophy and politics. But he did not forget the children. He wrote for them too. His learning was as massive and solid as that of the old pundits, bereft of their orthodoxy. He may be said to be the modern Bhishma Pitamaha who had eaten nobody's salt. He was not subservient to anybody, except to the truth he saw at the time. It may be no truth, but it was so for him. He was a man of universal courtesy. His manners were perfect. Even when he hit hard, he remained calm and collected.

Rajaji was a great journalist. He was put in charge of *Young India*, when Gandhiji was convicted of sedition and awarded six years' imprisonment in 1922. Rajaji founded the weekly *Swarajya*. He wrote



in it from week to week and often two articles a week. He continued writing in this paper almost to his very end. One often looked for Rajaji's views on any crucial problem that confronted the country.

He is no more with us; but his countrymen will always remember him. They will feel a void in the national life, which cannot be easily filled.

## A Life of Selfless Service

It is difficult to think of a world without Rajaji. For well over half a century he played a prominent part in India's public life, bringing into it a high standard of integrity and precision. It was my rare good fortune to know him intimately from the time he made his mark in Mrs Besant's Home Rule campaign in the middle of the First World War and to be associated with him at several points in the freedom struggle and later in Free India.

Memories crowd on me as I speak of him. He was such a contrast to Mrs Besant in the advocacy of freedom for India. After her brilliant and passionate plea for our freedom in Gokhale Hall meetings in Madras, came Rajaji's quietly-spoken but irresistible argument in favour of the national cause.

He was drawn into a close association with Gandhiji when he assumed the leadership of the freedom movement after the First World War. For a decade thereafter he was content to devote his great talents to the furtherance of Gandhiji's constructive programme until Mr Ramsay Macdonald, British Prime Minister, committed his Government at Round Table Conference in London to full responsible government for India as a member of a multi-racial Commonwealth.

For Rajaji this seemed to mark a point of departure from his previous activities. He saw in the declaration a new hope for India. The Gandhi-Irwin pact in the early thirties owed a great deal to Rajaji's earnest effort behind the scenes to bring it about to enable Gandhiji to go to the second Round Table Conference as the sole representative of the Congress.

In the subsequent developments right up to the Second World War, Rajaji played a great part. He provided the formula on which Gandhiji negotiated a settlement with the new Viceroy, Lord Lin-



lithgow, and enabled Congress Ministries to function in seven out of 11 provinces where the party had a majority in the new legislatures.

Rajaji was acknowledged to be the most successful among the Chief Ministers, setting an example for a clean, efficient administration.

On the outbreak of the Second World War, he resisted, but unsuccessfully, the move of the radical elements in the Congress to compel the Ministries to resign. He knew that out of office the Congress Party's capacity to persuade the British to create a war-time national government, with a promise of full freedom for India at the end of the war would be negligible. He was in a minority in holding this view; but he proved to be right. When I ventured to plead with the Viceroy to accept the suggestion of a representative Central Government for the period of the war, he replied that he could have agreed if all Congress leaders were of Rajaji's type. For nearly two years thereafter, undaunted by failure, he strove with the help of friends like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru to seek a way out.

When Sir Stafford Cripps came to India in 1942 with an offer from the Churchill Government, he turned to Rajaji for advice at every point of difficulty. Over a deadlock threatening to wreck the mission over defence arrangements, Cripps asked me if Rajaji, Sapru and my brother, BN Rau, could evolve a compromise formula. These three sat that night into the early hours of the morning and produced one that appealed to Cripps as satisfactory.

After the failure of the Cripps Mission, Rajaji told an AICC meeting at Allahabad that only a National Government could possibly save India from a Japanese invasion and suggested a solution which implied acceptance of the principle of the country's partition as the price for Jinnah's support. It needed great courage to put forward such a proposal. It was rejected and Rajaji was almost completely isolated. But convictions came first with him, and personal or party loyalties could not deflect him from the course he considered right.

Later in the year came the 'Quit India' resolution which he thought was a tactical blunder. But his personal relations with Gandhiji remained unshaken by differences on issues, however impor-



tant they might have been. Out of prison he worked ceaselessly with friends like Sapru for a war-time settlement with Britain. Vindication of his standpoint came later, at the end of the war, and he was considered the right choice as India's last Governor-General before the declaration of the Republic.

In Free India, as in the decades of our struggle, Rajaji followed the path he had carved for himself, never afraid of differing from his colleagues and preferring to be alone when he felt he was right. Such men are rare.

I have no regrets over his passing away at 94, though personally I feel a void within; we must be grateful to Providence for sparing this great statesman for so long to render a service to India of a quality beyond the capacity of ordinary mortals.

I have only one regret: in 1962, it was my privilege to accompany Rajaji to New York, Washington and London on a great mission, the suspension of nuclear tests as a preliminary to disarmament. I remember vividly, as though it was yesterday, one episode—our meeting with President Kennedy. We had been warned that it was very busy day for the President, and he could spare only 20 minutes. But Rajaji's presentation of the case was so convincing that Mr Kennedy sat fascinated. The minutes sped well beyond an hour, but the President ignored his other engagements to listen to a deeply moving appeal by Rajaji on behalf of defenceless humanity.

Finally, as the interview terminated, Mr Kennedy gave him the assurance that something would be done; and later he told one of his officials present at the interview that never before in his life had he felt the impact of ancient wisdom as he had done from Rajaji.

In reporting the results of the mission to Prime Minister Nehru, I mentioned this interview and suggested that Rajaji be India's representative at all future world disarmament conferences. He seemed at first attracted by the suggestion but other considerations came up and it was dropped. Such an assignment would have been an appropriate crown for a life of selfless service to India in a spirit of broad humanity.



## Heroic Heart

Having known Rajaji for well over 50 years and having watched with awe and admiration his rock-like strength standing steadfast and unmoved amidst storms of triumph and disaster, I need not apologize for hailing him in public (as I often used to in private) as the Bhishma Pitamaha of the modern age. Without borrowing from Vyasa or from Homer (on Odysseus) the generalized epithets appropriate to a hero embodying such wisdom and integrity. I venture to show these qualities in action by recalling some memorable episodes, the first of which alone is public property.

Rajaji's solid contribution to the political education and political progress of India is best illustrated by his demand for "assurances," before the acceptance of office in the provinces by the Congress in 1937. Gandhiji, by his honest down-to-earth approach to politics, recognized the high importance of substantial or organic *Swaraj* (as distinguished from formal or constitutional independence). If there was a genuine desire to transfer power from the people of Great Britain to the people of India, the transfer could just as well be brought about by an agreed convention between the Governor, the popular Ministries and the people of the provinces as by a specific provision in a British Act of Parliament. The assurances were legal, constitutional and workable and would have brought the substance of self-government in the provincial sphere. But this was suspected to be a 'trap' by British diehards. In one sense it was a trap devised by Rajaji to imprison and utilize the sunlight of free enlightened public life which could have been the common possession of Britain and India. In any case, the signal and singular success of the Congress Ministry in Madras stemmed from the far-sighted constructive genius of the Prime Minister (as the Chief Ministers of the Provinces were then designated). But for the war, the spread of Hindi by consent and the enforcement of Prohibition would have proceeded smoothly in the old Madras Province.



On October 11, 1936, Dr MK Sambasivan, a leading Congressman and Municipal Chairman of Kumbakonam, who had suddenly taken ill, was rushed to a nursing home in Madras where he died after an emergency operation in the early hours of October 12. The body was removed to my house in Alwarpet, I being his next of kin. Many friends wanted to have the body taken to Kumbakonam for an elaborate public funeral, while a small and sensitive minority preferred its prompt, simple cremation at the nearest *ghat*. There were many arguments, telegrams, telephone talks and feverish goings to and fro. Hours passed and nothing could be done, because there was no one to decide what was to be done. Just then Rajaji, accompanied by Sri K Santhanam, came in to condole. He enquired: "Why are there no preparations?" This question was a curt dismissal of the claims of the patriotic public of Kumbakonam. Someone with authority had spoken. The decision was accepted and quickly carried out with the consent of all concerned. At the moment, one could see, through the cloud of grief and the jungle of mixed motives, the sunlit summit which gives shapeliness to tragedy.

On August 9, 1942, it was my good fortune to seek and secure Rajaji's guidance in a crisis which was at once personal, institutional and national. When the British Government suddenly let loose its leonine violence and deprived Gandhiji of his freedom and the country of its natural leadership, Presidency College, like most other institutions in India, threatened to fall apart. The staff and the students were deeply divided, not only in ideas but in readiness to live up to them. While the majority were sentimentally but ineffectively pro-Congress, a few were for active violence and many were dead against "quarrelling with their bread and butter." Communists, communalists, scholarship-holders, sticklers for quality of sacrifice, and various other categories of dissidents were pulling in different directions. If only the College could develop a centre to hold things together, establish some autonomous source of authority and preserve through action or deliberate omission its own identity as a sound, living, growing organism, one brick would have been fixed in the grand structure, one tree would have struck deeper roots in the garden of *organic swaraj*, which Gandhiji was trying to rear.

I was then Additional Professor to assist the Principal, and



approached Rajaji for advice. Rajaji accepted me unreservedly as (in his own words) "a non-paying client" (in reality) a non-paying patient, and handled the case so deftly and aseptically that the College gained much and lost nothing by the storm. Rajaji's advice was simple, practical and morally sound. The power, energy, enthusiasm came from the students. Let them also assume responsibility for holding things together. Enable them to decide for themselves whether as a body they would continue the strike and stay out or call it off and resume attendance. No one was to be insulted; no one's motive was to be questioned. Hurried consultations and weighing of block votes went on briskly and peacefully every morning. For many days the attendance was nil and then on September 15 it was nearly full.

This demonstration of genuine democracy functioning in the open, and resulting in autonomy and solidarity, was so impressive that the senior ICS men who were the Governor's advisers, the top police officers and many thoughtful observers were full of admiration for the way the whole College, from Principal through staff and students to the peons, held together during those fateful five weeks. But then, it was not without its price. Principal Papworth was promptly demoted. It was left to Sir CP Ramaswamy Iyer to rescue him and instal him at the head of the educational system of Travancore, but that is another story.

Whatever the effect of these events on the College and the country, their impact on me has been profound and permanent. Rajaji's calm analysis of every casuistical problem as it arose provided for me the most valuable apprenticeship in putting into practice the principles of *svadharma* (one's duty in one's station). If during the last eleven years I have now and then approached the heart of the Gandhi-mystery (the technique of creating out of chaos a better order in one's own world, whether large or small), the modern Ekalavya can only attribute this success to the brief but intensive training imparted by Rajaji during those days when there was little teaching but much assisting to be done.

Sri Ramana Maharshi was a very human person whose most endearing quality was *saulabhya*, easy accessibility to everyone at all times. He was like a child ever ready to listen, though sparing of

speech. It was in his presence that I learnt the humility to learn, when the time came, not only the Gandhian technique but the poetry that was the power behind it, from Rajaji, himself a pastmaster of both the technique and the power. To true *bhakti*, which is power (over no one but within us all), the Maharshi assigned a higher status than to *vukti* or technique. And he made it clear that the real power behind Gandhi, like that behind Hanuman, was devotion to Rama. In *bhakti* too I had my pupillage under Rajaji when, week after week during my *Indian Express* days, he helped me with loving care to finalize my draft English rendering of his exquisite blend of Valmiki, Kamban and modern sensibility. If it was exhilarating to discuss with him word values and sentence structure, the whole business of studying and Englishing his Tamil masterpiece proved for me a transforming experience, a re-living of the Rama legend which is admittedly the most precious element in the Gandhi legacy. The heroic heart at the heart of the mystery of our humanistic religion is the Indian people's silent subordination of *preyas* to *sreyas*—of material to moral values, for which a common term is *dharma* and the proper name is Rama.



## How I Grew Fond of Rajaji

There can be no doubt that, if Rajaji has ever in his thoughts any time for me and for what I stand for, he thoroughly disapproves and quickly passes on to less uncongenial reflections. It may also be that with the presumption usually credited to a Communist I return the compliment. But that, I feel, is not the whole story.

For many valid reasons the two of us have had very little contact with each other. There was no occasion for him to know me, for our paths never met—perhaps I should say ‘almost never,’ for since I wrote a study of Gandhiji in 1959 we had a few personal exchanges which, for my part, I cherish.

I have a hunch, however, that he has room in his mind, and perhaps also in his heart, for a kind of tolerance and even affection for unregenerates like myself. I may confess that though remote from Rajaji in every sense of the term and cast entirely differently, I have for him a feeling of what might be called fondness which all my caveates in respect of his testament to our country cannot negate.

Rajaji was already a national leader when I was in my teens. Those were the days of non-cooperation, when the Gandhi magic held all India in its spell, when for a heady year or more our people, Hindus and Muslims together, were awake and ecstatic as never before or since. Salem in Tamil Nad came then to be celebrated in our minds on account of two dissimilar but distinguished men—C Vijayaraghavachariar, who presided over the historic Congress at Nagpur (December 1920) which put the seal on the non-violent non-cooperation programme tentatively accepted by the special session at Calcutta three months earlier, and Mr C Rajagopalachari, a front-ranker among Gandhi’s lieutenants, an intellectual rejoicing in first principles and yet flexible and pragmatic, a foil somewhat to the ardent gush of some colleagues in the leadership and to the one-track orientation of Gandhiji’s mind.



His reputation, however, was that of an orthodox Gandhian, a 'no-changer' when CR Das and Motilal Nehru powerfully canvassed the idea of entry into the then constructed legislatures, winning later the Mahatma's acquiescence in deviation from his original writ. Rajaji stuck to Gandhiji's patented ways of mass work—organizing spinners and village industries, building teams of disciplined, if somewhat dulled and eccentrically-minded 'constructive' workers, waiting for the main chance of the next phase of the struggle. He could insulate himself from what might be called the modish impetuosities of the late 'twenties' and the early and middle 'thirties,' whether of the brand sported by Jawaharlal Nehru or by Subhas Chandra Bose. His role seemed somewhat unobtrusive—his strategy basing itself on avoidance of merely spectacular effect and on a long-term perspective of what may be called 'middle-of-the-road' development of Free India that was to be.

Thus, Rajaji came to be known as the brain behind the right-wing constellation around Gandhiji, and in my part of the country was not particularly popular. As head of the Congress Ministry set up in 1937 in Madras Province, he gave a leg up to Hindi *prachar*—which might seem to many as anachronistic but was not—and would stand no nonsense even about 'Congress socialism.' When, defying Gandhiji, Subhas Chandra Bose got elected to a second term of Congress Presidentship at Tripura (1939), it was Rajaji who, doubtless with other capable help, master-minded the offensive against the intruder. He had a distaste for slogans but an easy penchant for aphorisms. Don't get on to Subhas's 'leaky boat', he told everybody, for it might just sink—and somewhat deviously, he and his friends had their way. One often heard him described those days as the wily Brahmin in Gandhiji's entourage, a master of scheming and, with his intellectual powers, a formidable customer.

I have no means of being certain, but I have an idea that the Second World War shook him deeply and brought out something of the clarity of thought and a bent for non-conformism which, though vitally a part of him as a particularly sapient human being, he had persuaded himself, under the Gandhi spell, to keep in cold storage. More than most of his colleagues, he reflected on the implications of the war on the world scene where, willy-nilly, India



also belonged. He sensed, besides, that the movement for Pakistan, crude and perverse as it might appear, should not just be attributed to Muslim intransigence but to deeper factors which could be disregarded only at the country's peril. It was, thus, that he alone of India's top-rung leaders offered a formula of *rapprochement* which touched the heart even of the recalcitrant Muslim League leaders and, if perceptively followed upon, could have given a less unhappy direction to our recent history.

For some years, thus, Rajaji was in the Congress and yet not of it—the sort of person who, with his unique amalgam of qualities, could be the first Indian tenant of the Viceroy's House (now Rashtrapati Bhavan) on the transfer of power and the retirement of Lord Mountbatten soon afterwards. Meanwhile, he had been Governor of West Bengal where he was witness to the 'miracle' wrought by Gandhiji (August—September 1947) in bringing together bitterly-estranged Muslims and Hindus. His old love, the Congress Party, called him back to more arduous assignments, that of Home Minister at a critical time of the Government of India, and later, in 1952, when things looked difficult for Congress in the then undivided Madras State to be its Chief Minister. It was not quite like Cincinnatus leaving his plough, but nobody else could fill the bill.

The wise old conservative, however, who, in the blissful dawn of mass awakening, had hitched his wagon to the Gandhi star, was growingly critical of the direction, or rather the misdirection, which the country seemed to him to be given in a fitful and futile quasi-radicalism. It was Jawaharlal Nehru's twilight days also, and Rajaji's sharp, keen, down-to-earth cogitation led him to a decisive parting of the ways with his erstwhile colleagues. He thus became the founder and the high priest, which he still is in spite of many incompatibilities, of the Swatantra Party. I am in total disagreement with Swatantra policies, but that is irrelevant in so far as my appreciation of Rajaji is concerned.

Much before I had any personal contact with him, I had chanced upon his English translation of parts of *Kamba Ramayana*. It stirred me and I took an instant liking to one with whom I had little rapport, and the liking, in spite of the sheer distance between

us, has grown. I have dipped into some of his writings and have felt further drawn to the great man. His political attitudes have often irked me but I have sensed something of the immemorial strength and dignity of India in his personality. I do not know Tamil but I have no doubt he writes in it superbly—avoiding excess, as the Greeks taught the world, and seeking to be true, as old India perennially enjoins us to the kindred points of heaven and home.



## Unequalled Record of Service

My earliest memory of Rajaji goes back to November 1922. A session of the All-India Congress Committee took place at that time in Calcutta where we were then living. I attached myself to the entourage of Motilal Nehru and used to go to the meetings every day; they were held under shamiana at the residence of Deshbandhu Das. The session was politically an important one—for me, however, the importance of the session lay in my coming into contact, for the first time, with a large number of leaders of India whom I had till then admired only from a distance. I do not remember them all but among those who made a strong enough impression for it to remain with me for half a century was the even then redoubtable C Rajagopalachari. He was at that time a staunch 'no-changer', with the natural proclivity of youth for extremism. I was all on his side.

For many years thereafter I never met him but was more affected by his personality than most Indians. This was because my mother worked for several years in the cause of temple-entry by Harijans in South India and Rajaji, then as now standing four-square for the under-privileged, was her great support. She used to talk to us often of this great man, of his selflessness, of the saintliness of his character and of the acuity of his mind. As a result, I followed with much interest the development of Rajaji's political thought, his resignation from the Congress in 1942 and his subsequent negotiations with Mr Jinnah.

My next personal contact with Rajaji was when he came to New Delhi as a Member of the Interim Government in 1946. We stayed in No 3, Clive Road (now Thyagaraja Marg). His house was next door at No 1. My wife and I had the privilege of doing small neighbourly services for him. The rigidities of protocol not having then developed to the extent as it has now, our neighbourly

intercourse was uninhibited giving us many and frequent opportunities to benefit from Rajaji's wisdom and his sage advice.

On one occasion, I pleaded with him for the establishment of a few educational institutions which could give to the most talented of the children of India the best possible education which would train not only their intellect but would discipline their character. I felt that the mere increase in the volume of education—at the cost, moreover, of lowering its standard—would not produce for our infant democracy the quality of leadership it needed to develop or even to survive. He listened with great attention and then turned me down flat. "You want, young man," he said, 'a new Brahminism. This country will not take it. It wants equality, not excellence.' That truth is more evident today than it was a quarter of a century ago.

One of my most vivid recollections of Rajaji is from his visit to Washington in the winter of 1962 along with Mr R R Diwakar and Mr B Shiva Rao, as the spokesman of the Gandhi Peace Foundation delegation, to persuade the United States to stop nuclear explosions. This was his first (and only) visit abroad. He was concerned that he might not be able to stand the cold; also that the food might not suit him. Central heating maintained the temperature of our residence at a steady 72° F and Rajaji never felt cold; the South Indian ladies of the Embassy cooked for him South Indian dishes so he felt at home. In general, however, it was evident that he was not prepared, in spite of all his reading, for the overwhelming affluence of the Western world.

I took the delegation to see President Kennedy. We had barely sat down in the waiting room—which was, incidentally, the Cabinet Room of the United States—when the door opened, a young man walked briskly in, shook hands all round and took us into another room a short distance away where flash bulbs popped, television lights shone and batteries of cameramen started taking out pictures. I recall clearly Rajaji looking up to the man on his left (who was a whole twelve inches taller than he!) and saying in a very gentle voice: "Am I in the presence of the President of the United States?" It was obvious that Rajaji, having been used to the pomp and ceremony of the Viceroy's House, was totally unprepared



for the informality of the White House and had not realized, till the photographing started, that the young man who had led him in was President Kennedy himself!

The colloquy that followed was one that gave me rare delight. I have had the good fortune of being present when many great men had argued their points of view with each other in many parts of the world. But I had seldom seen a case being presented with such lucidity of argument, such economy of speech, such felicity of language, such gentleness of manner and such command of the facts as Rajaji displayed that day. It was interesting to watch President Kennedy's reactions, for he too was a great admirer of style. One could almost see his eyes open wider and wider in wonder and in admiration of the frail little man who was making this masterly presentation. Rajaji, as was the foregone conclusion, did not at once succeed in his mission—for the world is not governed by the good but by the strong—but he left an abiding impression on President Kennedy.

I have had the privilege over the years of access to Rajaji whose acuteness of mind, range of knowledge, fearlessness of character, devotion to truth and record of service to the Motherland is unequalled. I have been the recipient of the warmth of his friendship. I have paid frequent homage to him at his home in Madras. I take this opportunity of paying my public tribute to this great son of India and of expressing the hope that he may continue to be with us for many years to come.

## A Sheaf of Memories

It was as a young law graduate that I first met Rajaji. In the summer of 1932, the Bachelor of Law examination results were out and I was wondering what to do next. Most of us were then held in spell by leaders of the independence movement. I thought I should consult Shri C Rajagopalachari, from distance a most fascinating and learned man. So I went to his Ashram in Tiruchengode. We talked a little about my future but much more about a decade of Khadi work in and around this Ashram, the economic conditions in the country and the political prospects before the nation. My mind was made up. Within a few months—in August 1932 to be exact—I found myself a *Satyagrahi* and in prison.

Then on, as soldiers in the struggle for independence, our lots were cast together. Of the three great influences on my life, he became one over these twenty years. We respected him as a scholar, as a patriot, as a man with a most incisive mind who could see the light at the end of a long and sometimes a winding tunnel. All of us were deemed to belong to a group in political thinking not totally akin to Rajaji. I, for instance, was often looked upon as being closer to Sri K Kamaraj.

An intimate and equally constructive period of association came in 1952. I had sought election to the State legislature. My reputation as a Congressman and a lawyer stood me in good stead. In the composite State of Madras, the general swing was against the Congress. All the Ministers including the Chief Minister, except one, were defeated in the elections. In spite of it I got elected from a fairly difficult constituency (Coimbatore-Urban).

In the general election of 1952, the Congress Party had lost considerable ground in Madras. It did not fare too well in the



Andhra and Malabar districts which returned quite a few members of the Communist Party. What was more, there was no political Party enjoying an absolute majority in the Assembly. In a House of 375, the Congress members numbered 152. There were 62 Independent MLAs and 62 belonged to the Communist Party. A Democratic Front headed by Sri. T. Prakasam claimed sizable support from them as well as of 38 members of the Krishikar Lok Party, 19 members of the Tamil Nadu Toilers Party, 5 members of the Forward Bloc and the Scheduled Castes Federation and 3 of Commonweal Party. It was with reference to this strange political alliance as much as to the feelings of some in the Congress Party that Rajaji had uttered a great truth, half in jest: "We dislike anybody whom we know and prefer a stranger to one we know." Madras faced an uncertain political future for the first time.

As the post-election picture became clear, I issued an emphatic statement that Rajaji should be requested to lead the Congress Legislature Party and to head the Government. This surprised many and displeased some, including those who looked upon themselves as my friends and supporters. None the less, when the Party met on March 29, I moved the following resolution: "The Madras Legislature Congress Party is strongly of the opinion that in the present political situation in the State, the services of an eminent statesman like Sri C. Rajagopalachari are needed and, therefore, requests Sri C. Rajagopalachari to take over the leadership of the Congress Party in the State Legislature." The resolution was seconded by Sri A. B. Shetty.

After this resolution was adopted unanimously, Srimati Soundaram Ramachandran and I left for New Delhi. Our task was to talk to the members of the High Command and in particular to persuade the Congress President, Pandit Nehru, to agree to draft Rajaji. There was some resistance. Eventually the wiser counsels prevailed. Many thought, rather uncharitably, that Rajaji's reluctance to come back to politics was only for public consumption and that he was only too willing at heart to be persuaded. *Shankar's Weekly* of those days carried a report of many important and not-so-important personalities trooping up to Rajaji and bringing pressure



on him. The caption of this imaginary but imaginatively humorous eye-witness account was "Rajaji Relents."

We returned to Madras the following day with two letters from Pandit Nehru—one for the outgoing Chief Minister Sri P S Kumaraswami Raja and the other for Rajaji. When the formal meeting of the Congress Legislature Party met on Monday, March 31, Sri Kamaraj moved a resolution proposing the election of Rajaji as leader. He spoke of Rajaji's unwillingness to shoulder the responsibilities of office because of poor health. But in the present difficulties there was none abler in sight and the party needed the guidance of an experienced leader. In acceding to the party's request, Sri Kamaraj added, Rajaji was sacrificing his health. This resolution was seconded by Sri N Sanjeeva Reddy and supported by all the 170 members present who had been elected either to the State Assembly or Council or to the House of People (now Lok Sabha).

His advice at this critical juncture was to stand united and to respect the distinction the Constitution had drawn between the legislative and the administrative sphere of Government. He, therefore, enjoined on everyone not to "interfere" to "influence" or to "affect" the executive but to leave it well alone to provide a clean and efficient administration. His emphasis was on working out areas of like-mindedness, not merely within the Congress Party, but in relation to other MLAs who at that time were outside the Congress. His mandate to the party was two-fold: "Let us attend to agriculture and character." Two themes uppermost in his mind as Chief Minister were the future of our agriculture and building the nation's character.

Soon after the election of Rajaji as leader I left Madras, even without meeting him. I was told Rajaji was surprised to learn that I had left the place. A few days later, a letter was delivered to me while I was pleading a case in Coimbatore District Court, asking me to come to Madras. Perhaps Rajaji wanted to take me as a Minister in his Cabinet.

And so I became his Finance and Food Minister. There were many who raised their eyebrows upon what appeared to them a



meteoric political rise for a young untried Congressman. To them, Rajaji said : "No, Subramaniam has broad shoulders." Later on many more portfolios were given to me including Education.

Soon after he became Chief Minister—and there still was some criticism because he had allowed himself to be drafted as Chief Minister after having been India's Governor-General—he publicly stated that India's Enemy Number 1 was the Communists. Protests were loud and wide. In the course of one of the debates in the State Legislature a few weeks later, Rajaji recalled this statement. He said: "Let me now name our Enemy Number 2. This is the Public Works Department."

Rajaji had a feeling for the pulse of the people. As a good administrator, he also knew what went on in each Government department. When he found there was inefficiency and corruption, he had the courage to admit it. As Chief Minister, he responded to popular sentiment by owning up the fact of corruption among some PWD officers and tried to remove the corrupt.

One of my earliest assignments as Finance Minister was to find funds for meeting the conditions of drought in the Rayalaseema districts of Andhra. The State budget was unbalanced, and we were in serious financial straits.

Rajaji fixed a meeting to discuss various employment-oriented and productive schemes for one afternoon. We met at 2 o'clock in his spare room. The Secretary in the Finance Department, Sri TA Varghese, brought up one scheme after another. We would go over the proposed expenditure and the works programme contained in each scheme. He naturally put forward the Finance Department's traditional and correct point of view. So we would suggest that we might cut down something here or something there. Once in a while, he would suggest we might omit a scheme altogether because the budget was tight and the expected benefit from it was not substantial.

In spite of his age and ill-health, Rajaji stayed the full course of discussion without a sign of fatigue. As we came out of the room, it was we and not he who looked tired. There was no further talk in the State, of Rajaji not being well or incapable of looking

into the detailed work of administration. The whispers about his ill-health were given a hasty and unhallowed burial.

Rajaji's capacity for hard work, his devotion to duty and his concern for public interest were a lesson to us. This is how he trained us into the art of administration. He never asked us to read our files or work long hours. He did this himself and his example was good enough for us. We saw it and tried to emulate his exertions for the welfare of the people and for a clean administration.

When I took part in the Assembly debates and was replying to the major points raised on the floor of the House, Rajaji would sometimes send up a chit, saying, should you not emphasize a particular set of facts (mentioned by him on the slip of paper) further? On another occasion, he would send a chit to remind me of a relevant point which I was about to miss. Or else, when I had completed my reply to a debate, I would get yet another pencilled note from Rajaji: "That was a very good speech." Sometimes, at the end of a long day's work when I would be thinking of going home, a big bundle of some fifty files would reach me. The directive would be: "The Chief Minister would like the Finance Minister to dispose of these files." He not merely delegated a great deal of work and authority, but groomed you up to be responsible and self-reliant.

And nothing escaped his eye. Out of such bundles of files disposed of by me, he would on an infrequent occasion pick up one file, point out a relevant fact or noting which I had missed and ask me if, in view of that, the decision needed to be slightly amended. He rarely interfered, but every Minister knew his performance was being watched in order that it might improve. It was a constant enhancement of one's life to have to deal with a leader so learned, so generous, so zestful and so humorous who looked upon one as colleague and not follower. And as for the State's problems, he seemed to be so wide awake, so interested and so eagerly curious that he seemed ageless.



## Rajaji, the Great

It is difficult to write a comprehensive article about what Rajaji was and what Rajaji did. In fact, the political history of India during the last five decades has an indelible impress of Rajaji's unique personality. It was my good luck to be associated with him in one way or other ever since 1920.

When Mahatma Gandhi emerged as the greatest political leader after the death of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, he lost no time in launching a very active movement against the British rule. His first movement was a very novel one. It was known as the non-violent non-cooperation movement. In other words, it also meant the withdrawal of the voluntary cooperation that Indians offered to the British regime. It had some parallel with the movement started several decades before in the US by an extraordinary person known as Henry David Thoreau. While Thoreau could not develop it in an active political struggle, Gandhiji succeeded in doing so. The movement took the country and also the British Government by surprise. The success of the movement largely depended upon the response that Gandhiji could evoke in the initial stages. What was needed, to begin with, was the support of the leading intellectuals in all parts of India. While in search of such intellectual giants, Gandhiji came across Sri C Rajagopalachari whom he later on fondly called Rajaji.

Rajaji was not a man who could easily join any fancy movement. Rajaji had heard the name of Mahatma Gandhi and particularly his work in South Africa, but he had not had any opportunity of coming in close contact with him. When Gandhiji started expounding his theory and practice of non-cooperation movement, one of the first intellectuals who joined him without any reservation whatsoever was Rajaji. When Rajaji entered the movement he helped Gandhiji improve upon the technique of it. Rajaji was a man endowed with the keenest and subtlest intellect. In this

field he had no equal and surely no superior. He could explain the non-violent non-cooperation movement even better than Gandhiji himself. This friendship between Rajaji and Gandhiji matured and developed into almost an unbreakable bond. With Rajaji, Gandhiji could do many more things and could attract stalwarts almost from every State. Thus came great people like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Pandit Motilal Nehru, CR Das, Lala Lajpatrai, Dr Rajendra Prasad and others. Intellectually, Rajaji was far ahead of any of these.

Later on, Gandhiji launched a no-tax movement in some taluks of Gujarat. Although that part of the movement had to be withdrawn because the people in those areas had not imbibed the spirit of his non-violence, the agitation as a whole progressed and gathered momentum. Gandhiji was soon arrested and put in jail.

In the absence of Gandhiji, the Gaya Congress, which was held during his incarceration, appeared to be somewhat orphaned. Some stalwarts in the Congress, like CR Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru, were prepared to take part in the elections and exploit the legislative field to further the political struggle. Rajaji naturally thought that this would not, in any event, be an improvement on Gandhiji's movement. The spirit of the Gandhian movement was non-cooperation and not responsible cooperation, which idea was first mooted by Lokamanya Tilak in 1919. The Gaya Congress was turned into a battleground between the two schools of thought: the 'pro-changers' who wanted to go to the legislatures and attack the Government from, what they called, a position of vantage and the 'no-changers' who stuck to the original Gandhian concept of non-violent non-cooperation. Rajaji was naturally the leader of the 'no-changers'. What happened at Gaya at once made Rajaji the undisputed leader of India. Rajaji was known for his straight talk. He was not an orator but he was simply brilliant when it came to marshalling arguments and presenting his case.

There were many occasions when Rajaji showed his brilliance at the meetings of the AICC and the open sessions. Gandhiji began to rely on him increasingly for arguing his own point of view. In the Civil Disobedience Movements of 1930 and thereafter, Rajaji gave his unstinted support to Gandhiji.



Rajaji became the first Premier of Madras when in 1937 the Congress had a majority there. His stewardship was notable for a very high standard and morally sound administration. In a State where the non-Brahmin vote was preponderant, Rajaji was accepted as the Premier because he represented values which had great appeal for the minds of all people. In later life Rajaji fulfilled many important roles. He was Governor of Bengal, he was a very prominent Minister of Jawaharlal's Cabinet and later on the Governor-General of Free India after Lord Mountbatten had left. During his days of Governor-Generalship he was increasingly drawn towards Jawaharlal Nehru. A kind of bond arose between them which did not exist before. In the Congress, Rajaji was regarded as a rightist—and Jawaharlal called himself a leftist. There was no truck between the two so far as the economic policies were concerned. But in the administration Jawaharlal Nehru largely depended upon the experience and advice of Rajaji.

When the first President of the Union of India was to be elected, Jawaharlal was very keen that Rajaji should fill that honoured post. Other influential members of the Congress Committee wanted Dr Rajendra Prasad to be the first President. Dr Rajendra Prasad was the President of the Constituent Assembly as well. For a long time Jawaharlal insisted that he would prefer Rajaji to Rajen Babu. So much was the rapport between the two. At one stage Jawaharlal wrote a letter to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel that in case Rajen Babu was elected he himself would not continue to be the Prime Minister of India. He left that letter with the Sardar and went to England where he was invited. He returned to India and found that a majority of Congress members were in favour of Dr Rajendra Prasad. So Dr Rajendra Prasad was elected first President of the Indian Union.

Rajaji was not upset by this decision. He continued to give the same support to Jawaharlal Nehru and the administration as he used to do for some years before. Things went on very well until the break came. In 1959, Rajaji formed the Swatantra Party.

I do not want to strike a personal note but I am impelled to do so because of the broad view that Rajaji always had in administration. I never saw eye to eye with Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in quite a

few matters. Jawaharlal regarded me as the Sardar's man and that, in his eyes, was my disqualification. Under instructions from the Sardar I had worked for the election of Mr Tandon as the President of the Indian National Congress against Acharya JB Kripalani who was encouraged to contest by Jawaharlal. Rajaji very often used to tell Jawaharlal Nehru that he should not take a narrow view.

I always held Rajaji in the highest esteem and respect not only because he was kind to me personally but because of his vast knowledge of men and matters. There was hardly an Indian who had so much and so deep a knowledge of India and her politicians as Rajaji had. He had his moorings in the strong religious faith which never left him. In fact, everything he did was based on his religious faith. He was not a bigot in any sense of that expression. Right up to the last day of his life, Rajaji went on educating the people of India and guiding them on the right lines.



## As a Man of Letters

Rajaji would have objected to the title, for he was no 'professional' writer. Although he was among the most respected writers of our time and the Sahitya Akademi rightly elected him as one of its first Fellows, Rajaji, the man of letters, is not easily isolable from the total man. In the course of an interview he told Ved Mehta: "I have written books, articles, stories, fables. But, on the whole, I am not a man of letters... I have written mostly for specific causes I was working for." And, indeed, the 'causes' were many, ranging from khadi, Prohibition, removal of untouchability and temple-entry for Harijans of the earlier phase of his public service spread over half a century, to the latter-day campaigns against BCG vaccinations, permit-licence-raj, nuclear proliferation and the general decline of moral values. He wielded with mastery both Tamil and English, and if in certain fields—fiction, narrative, exhortation—he was perhaps more at home in Tamil; in other fields—intellectual debate, dialectical presentation, persuasive reasoning—he found in English a readier and more malleable tool.

Also, he excelled equally as writer, speaker and conversationist, and he had the gift of resilience that adjusted itself to the different levels of audience with their diverse moods of expectancy and receptivity, like a musician whose mastery is so perfect that he essays melodious variety with unconscious naturalness and ease!

Of his immediate contemporaries, he provokes comparison with Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhiji was bilingual or even trilingual, and for him too the management of words was but incidental to the management of men and affairs and the initiation and promotion of the peaceful revolution for the winning of *Swaraj* and the unfoldment of *Sarvodaya*. Although with Nehru, as with Gandhiji and Rajaji, authorship was forced by the exigencies of the revolution—prolonged periods of prison-life for example—he was rather more of a deliberate writer than the other two. And while

Nehru reaches now and then—in his 'Tryst with Destiny' speech, for example, or the obituary reference in Parliament to Gandhiji's martyrdom—it is Gandhiji and Rajaji who maintain a more consistently uniform level of crystal clarity and sufficiency in their writing. Again, of the three, while Rajaji shares with Gandhiji his etheric moral tone and Messianic earnestness, he shares with Nehru his global humanistic culture, his wide-ranging scholarship and his feeling for the unexpected. It is also no more than a statement of fact to say that Rajaji's was the more versatile pen, for his canon is encyclopaedic in subject-matter and includes most of the contemporary literary genres. We have perhaps, to wait for the collection and publication of his tens of thousands of letters for anything like a proper appraisal of his vigorous and vivacious mind and his unfailing heart-warming sensibility.

Being a writer—a man of letters—has now become a trade, a bag of tricks and a certain slick competence; at best, it is a profession with certain recognized norms of behaviour. But writing is seldom a vocation now, a sacerdotaly. The French Nobel Laureate, Francois Mauriac, said:

"There is no doubt that our books have a deep resemblance to ourselves ..The humblest priest would tell me, like Maritain: 'begin by purifying the source and those who drink of the water cannot be sick'."

With Gandhiji and Rajaji, the quality of their writing, like the quality of their lives and ministry, derived from the secret reservoirs of their purified and sanctified self, and it didn't very much matter what they wrote about—for which forum—or in what genre or language. The soul-stamp was unmistakably there, and that made it authentic currency. Gandhiji wants a gloss on *The Hound of Heaven*, Rajaji promptly supplies it—and how entirely satisfactory it is! Here Francis Thompson, the Catholic mystic, meets on common ground the Gujarati Vaishnava and the Tamil bhakta. Rajaji's gloss transcends professorial elucidation or critical interpretation.



Rajaji's restless inquiring mind took him to far-flung pastures, old and new and till the very end there was no diminution of this lively curiosity. On receiving my edition of *Walden*, he wrote to me that he had read Thoreau and learned to appreciate him even before meeting Gandhiji. When Orient Longmans sent him (he was Chief Minister at that time) a copy of Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, he read it at once and wrote a detailed letter of appreciation. Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, Shankara's *Bhaja Govindam*, Tirumoolar, Tiruvalluvar, the Alvars, Avvai — Rajaji secured the seven oceans of the world's spiritual and secular literature and brought forth, for the edification and enlightenment of his readers, pearls of very great price. The classics glistened anew at his touch, for what he imparted was a contemporaneous setting and idiom. He was selective and suggestive, never long-winded and exhausting. If, on the one hand, he served up the classics of old as needed mental and spiritual food for our anguished times, he also elevated the teachings of Ramakrishna and Gandhiji to upanishadic permanence. He did not hesitate to call his book on the Paramahansa's teachings "Ramakrishna Upanishad", and at once Ramakrishna lines up with Visvamitra and Vamadeva of our hoary heritage. Likewise, Rajaji links Gandhian satyagraha or soul-force with the *Gita* vakya (xvii, 61), and comments:

"The secret presence of God in the hearts of all beings is the secret of satyagraha. It was not the application of a new technique but the understanding of ancient spiritual teaching and firm faith in its truth."

But, of course, Rajaji has received the widest acclaim chiefly as the author of the shortened prose versions of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, in this chiming with his own conviction that these were "the best service I have rendered to my people." These were written respectively after his two short but glorious spells as Chief Minister of Madras. They appeared first week after week in the Tamil journal, *Kalki*, and the circumstances of serial publication imposed an episodic pattern on the narrative. The Tamil versions were Englished, and although Navaratna Rama Rao's help is generously acknowledged, Rajaji's was nevertheless the ultimate responsi-



bility. How many gifted writers of our time—poets, dramatists, novelists—have not tried to re-tell Vyasa or Valmiki tailored to modern requirements! Yet Rajaji's versions stand apart by virtue of their very unselfishness. When Rajaji tells his story, he lets us forget him. He is not there at all! It is the story-telling itself, or rather enacting itself. Here is the account of Jarasandha's end, and a dozen lines project the whole drama before us:

“Bhima and Jarasandha were so equally matched in strength that they fought with each other continuously for thirteen days without taking rest or refreshments, while Krishna and Arjuna looked on in alternating hope and anxiety. On the fourteenth day, Jarasandha showed signs of exhaustion, and Krishna prompted Bhima that the time had come to make an end of him. At once Bhima lifted him and whirling him round and round a hundred times, dashed him to the earth and seizing his legs tore his body asunder into two halves. And Bhima roared in exultation.

“The two halves at once joined and Jarasandha, thus made whole, leapt up into vigorous life and again attacked Bhima.

“Bhima aghast at the sight, was at a loss what to do, when he saw Krishna pick up a straw, tear it into two, and cast the bits in opposite directions. Bhima took the hint, and when once again he tore Jarasandha asunder he threw the two portions in opposite directions, so that they could not come together and join. Thus did Jarasandha meet his end.”

It was as though Vyasa had seen it all, suffered it all—and Rajaji has seen it all too, and makes us also share in the action in some measure.

The figures and passions and events of the Heroic Age do not lend themselves easily to present-day norms of recital or portraiture. The heroes and heroines—a Duryodhana, a Ravana; a Bhima, a Bharata; an Abhimanyu, an Indrajit; a Draupadi, a Sita; a Bhishma, a Hanuman—mould, turning them almost into apocalyptic emanations. Where is the art that will facilitate the passage of the Heroic Age to our own teasing and tormented time? With Rajaji there is no art, no verbal craftsmanship; it is just total imaginative identifica-



ation with the theme and the characters that sparks off the Promethean heat and makes the Heroic Age live again in our own century of Hitler's war and megalomaniac tyranny and mangled innocence. Although normally critical orthodoxy may frown upon a story-teller, commenting upon the events in the first person, Rajaji now and then defies the doxies in order to achieve the desired effects. For example, people constantly wonder whether Bharata was altogether right in reprimanding his mother with so much violence of language. Rajaji's answer has a sterling sufficiency of its own:

"To understand Bharata's feelings, we should keep in mind his innate noble nature, his love for Rama, his grief for his father and the sense of guilt and shame that, for his sake, his mother had done this grievous wrong. We should not weigh his words in dry air and a chemical balance. In such contexts, poetry flashes fire. One sees it both in Valmiki and Kamban."

Again, in an attempt to explain the secret of the perennial appeal of the ancient epics notwithstanding the cumulative terror and pity, Rajaji writes after the unvarnished recital of the events leading to Drona's death:

"The sorrows of human life are painted with sublime beauty and rolled out in a grand panorama. Behind the story of errors and sorrows the poet enables us to have a vision of the Transcendent Reality. Thus it is that the *Mahabharata*, though a story, has come to be a book of dharma."

And Rajaji finds the utterly apt words in the 'Epilogue' to his *Ramayana* to insinuate the close links between life and literature:

"Rain falling from the heavens flows into the rivers and flows down to join the sea. Again from the sea the water is sucked up by the sun and rises to the sky, whence it descends again as rain and flows down as rivers. Even so, feelings and values rise from the people and, touching the poet's heart, are transformed into a poem which, in turn, enlightens and inspires the people."

Thus in every land the poets and their people continually reinforce each other."

This explains why some of Rajaji's own character-creations — Parvati, Sundari, Mukundam—are not only recognizably human, but have also their obscure and remote affiliations with the characters in classical epic and romance.

During the last phase of his variegatedly rich career, the "Satyam Eva Jayate" period as we may call it, Rajaji became the one-man border security force resisting as if single-handed the inroads of Untruth, the seductions of Paratantra and the hydra-headed permit-licence-raj. He was no doubt the unofficial generalissimo of the Swatantra Party, but he was even more truly a man of God, the sage who bore bold witness to the categorical imperatives and ineffable realities in the world of the Spirit. The fighter and campaigner was hand-in-glove with the fabulist and parable-maker, and this integral power was also the crusader and the arch-evangelist of Peace. How pregnant, how charged with the dance of life, are these utterances :

"Let not tools take possession of our souls : let us be in command of our souls."

"I see fear enveloping everywhere like a poisonous fog on all the significant sections of the people."

"I see God disappearing and mammon occupying His place in the hearts of man. I see traditional values of life centring on compassion steadily being starved out by an all-devouring State."

"I can't help being sad. I am not entirely hopeless; so my grief looks like anger."

"Let us look back a little while we march forward and let us weigh ourselves by history, rather than by wishes."

"Morality without religion is like calories without vitamins."

"Conferences speak only once, but literature speaks many times."

"There are two ways of deception : one is by simple deception, and the other is by compromise."

Till the end, till the very end, he could summon a power for good, a form of spiritual power, and this often took shape as the



shining winged word. John Gunther once called Rajaji 'the Brahmin Savannarola;' others have described him as the Ulysses of the freedom army, and still others have compared him with ascetic statesmen like Vidyaranya and Kautilya. He was above all a great builder, and as a bridge-builder between the past and the future, he found his stern historical sense and his unflinching feeling for science helpful to keep close to reality. But he had the seer's vision too which helped him to look far ahead. The final impression that his life and writing leave upon us is therefore that of a master-builder with clarity of vision and expression, an infallible sense of ends and means, and a profound concern for the total human situation. And his writing still remains a redemptive force bringing courage and hope to our nuclear-powered world all but edging towards the abyss of self-destruction. Rajaji's superb ministry with the wont of his pen is best summed up in the words of Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound* :

“To suffer woes which hope  
thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs...  
To defy power, which seems omnipotent;  
To love, and bear; to hope  
till hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing  
it contemplates...  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be;  
Good, great and joyous,  
beautiful and free;  
This is alone life, joy,  
empire and victory.”

## The Crusader for Prohibition

The story of Prohibition in India is interwoven with our freedom struggle right from the days of AO Hume, the founder of the Indian National Congress. I cannot do better than quote a few sentences from his impassioned denunciations of Abkari—the revenue derived from the liquor traffic which he called “The wages of sin.” Said Hume :

“I protest against the present iniquitous system which produced and now supports a large class whose sole interest it is to seduce their fellows into drunkenness and its necessary concomitants, debauchery and crime. While we debauch our subjects we do not even pecuniarily derive any profit from their ruin. Of this revenue, the wages of sin, it may...be truly said that ill-gotten wealth never thrives, and for every rupee additional that the Abkari yields, two at least are lost to the public by crime, and spent by the Government in suppressing it. I have no doubt whatsoever that if I be spared a few years longer I shall live to see effaced in a more Christian-like system, one of the greatest existing blots on our Government of India.”

Rajaji, as the Chairman of Salem Municipality in 1917, asked for the closure of liquor shops in Salem because the people did not want them. The British Government obliged him and closed the liquor shops under the local option clause.

Gandhiji made picketing of liquor shops an important part of the Satyagraha movement. Our mothers and sisters braved insults by the hooligans, went to prison and faced many hardships to save their men from the drink demon. The Congress adopted the policy of Prohibition and wrote it into the Congress constitution. To Gandhiji, Prohibition was symbolic of the nation's mood of harnessing all its energies to the bettering of the life of the Indian people,



a determination to face the problems and overcome them instead of running away from them under the effect of alcoholic beverages, and last but not the least, the will to use our resources judiciously to meet the basic needs of life and to build and augment those resources, human as well as economic and social, as rapidly as possible.

In 1937, Rajaji as the Premier or Prime Minister (as the Chief Minister was then designated) of Madras, took up Prohibition in this Province in all earnestness. Many other Congress Government did the same. Rajaji was vigilant like pussyfoot Jhonson who brought about Prohibition in the US and saw to it that saboteurs of Prohibition did not get a chance. One of his first acts was to transfer all police officers who drank themselves, from the dry districts. The Governor warned him that Prohibition would lead to loss of revenue and create serious financial difficulties to the Province. Rajaji was not deterred. He thought out a way for the Government to share the prosperity which Prohibition would bring. The money saved from drink, he averred, would be spent on household goods. The Sales Tax which Rajaji introduced has proved a veritable *Kamadhenu*. In 1970-71 the return from the Sales Tax in Tamil Nad was over Rs 105 crores.

The Congress Ministries resigned during the Second World War when the Government of India declared India as a belligerent nation without consulting India's representatives and out went the Congress Governments along with their policy and programme of Prohibition.

After the 'Quit India' movement came India's Independence and having led us to the cherished goal, the Father of the Nation left us. Rajaji became the Governor-General and replaced Lord Mountbatten. It was during this period that the Constitution of India was written and Prohibition found a prominent place under the Directive Principles of State policy in Article 47. This Article says : "The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and in particular the State shall endeavour to bring about Prohibition of the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drinks and drugs which are injurious to health."

It is obvious that the founding fathers of our Constitution were



convinced that Prohibition was necessary for raising the level of nutrition and the standard of living of our people and improvement of public health and it was the primary duty of the State to bring about these improvements.

Independent India should have gone dry in 1947 or at least after the adoption of the Constitution in 1950, but unfortunately barring a few stalwarts, many Congressmen were swayed by financial considerations and the agreements of officials who were generally opposed to Prohibition. Madras went dry at one stroke in 1948 and all other States adopted a programme of gradual increase of dry districts. The erstwhile State of Bombay went dry in stages over a period of about three years. The other States started the programme of Prohibition in a few districts, but their further progress was halting, and ultimately they started going back on the programme of Prohibition for one reason or other.

Rajaji's Tamil Nad, however, stood like a beacon light and the State remained dry under successive Chief Ministers, such as Rajaji, Mr Kamaraj, Mr Bhaktavatsalam, and Mr Annadurai, the first DMK Chief Minister. Mr Annadurai as Chief Minister, in 1968, offered to go round to other States along with Mr Kamaraj, and offer Satyagraha, if necessary, to have the programme of Prohibition implemented in the interests of the younger generation. "I do not want my son to see the ugly scenes of drunken street brawls which were so frequent in my youth", he said. He was the Chairman of the Reception Committee for the All India Prohibition Conference at Madras in 1968 and Rajaji came to the Conference on the last day. We had arranged for him to speak sitting, but he walked up to the microphone and spoke standing for full 15 minutes. Mr Annadurai's staunch adherence to Prohibition had bucked him up as it were.

The undoing of Prohibition in Tamil Nad now has therefore come to Rajaji as a big shock. He writes about it almost every week in *Swarajya* and *Kalki*.

Many in Tamil Nad are genuinely perturbed and would like to bring back Prohibition. Some would like to offer Satyagraha. Vinobaji, when approached for a message for Rajaji's 93rd Birthday



Anniversary Souvenir, said: "Rajaji has made great sacrifices, he is a man with frugal habits and is a personification of renunciation, as it were, but what have the others given up? It is no great merit for me not to drink. I have never tasted liquor. Those who offer Satyagraha should give up something which they are attached to. Then they will become worthy of Satyagraha and their sacrifice will bear fruit." Rajaji is in favour of intensive public education and organized public opinion demanding undoing of the retrograde step of scrapping Prohibition.

## Gandhiji and Rajaji

It was during the Rowlatt Bill agitation in 1919 that Gandhiji went to Madras at the invitation of Mr Kasturi Ranga Iyengar to enlighten the people of the South about the dangerous implications of the Black Bill. The man behind the Madras invitation was Sri C Rajagopalachari who played the host to Gandhiji in Madras. CR had only recently shifted to Madras from Salem where he was practising as a lawyer since 1900. A man of shy habits, CR had preferred to remain in the background, but his brilliance and selfless character had greatly attracted Gandhiji's Private Secretary, Mahadev Desai, who advised Gandhiji to "cultivate this man". Gandhiji did so. Ultimately for quite some time CR had become the "conscience keeper" of Gandhiji.

Gandhiji had so much influenced CR that we find him in 1920, addressing Gandhiji in a letter as "My dearest Master". At his call CR gave up his legal practice in 1921. He was also one of the signatories to the famous manifesto of October 4, 1921, declaring that it was the duty of every Indian soldier and civilian to sever his connection with the Government and find some other means of livelihood. CR was in very close touch with Gandhiji when the Non-cooperation Movement was in full swing.

In 1922, when Gandhiji withdrew the Civil Disobedience Movement, the AICC appointed a Civil Disobedience Inquiry Committee to re-assess the Satyagraha theories and practice in the form of the Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movement. CR, who was the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress at that time, was one of the members of this Committee which toured India. The report of the Civil Disobedience Committee



brought about a swing among the leaders to capture the legislative councils and local bodies.

CR Das and Motilal Nehru preferred the councils as the arena. But CR, a confirmed no-changer was opposed to council entry. At the Gaya Congress in 1922, under the presidentship of CR Das, his resolution for the boycott of the councils was carried by a big majority. However, the differences between the two parties, Swarajists and no-changers, were soon patched up; and in the following year (1923) at the Cocanada Congress, it was Sri C Rajagopalachari who moved the compromise resolution permitting the Swarajists to enter councils but the 'principle and policy of that boycott remained unaltered.'

During Gandhiji's absence in Yerawada jail, CR, for some time, edited *Young India*. CR had by then become used to prison-life. He was actively associated with the Vaikom Satyagraha and the Temple Entry Movement in the South. In 1924 when he sought Gandhiji's advice in respect of Vaikom Satyagraha, Gandhiji advised him to "regulate the movement" and play the negotiator with the Dewan of Travancore. By 1925, the Swaraja Party became the dominant wing of the Congress as reiterated by the AICC which met at Patna on September 22. The no-changers like CR and Rajendra Prasad began to devote themselves to the constructive programme of the Congress, such as Hindu-Muslim unity, eradication of untouchability, Swadeshi and prohibition.

In 1930 when Gandhiji addressed a letter to Lord Irwin before starting the Salt Satyagraha, CR got a copy of that letter and wrote about his apprehensions to him : ".....They cannot let the conflagration grow on the ground that much salt cannot be made by you. It is not salt but disobedience that you are manufacturing."

In 1932 CR was a very important negotiator at the time of Gandhiji's epic fast against Macdonald's Communal Award. He was instrumental in evolving the Yerawada Pact between the representatives of the Hindu Conference and the representatives of the Depressed Classes. When, in 1933, Gandhiji again started his 3-week fast starting from May 8, CR was critical and when at his request Gandhiji refused to undergo any medical examination before the fast,



CR wrote : "You are then conceding nothing and claiming infallibility." Gandhiji agreed for a medical examination.

In 1934 Gandhiji had suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement and on June 6, 1936, the Government of India lifted the ban off the Congress. After the passing of the Government of India Act, 1935, the councils became more important. In July 1937, the Wardha Congress allowed Congressmen to accept office under the new reforms. Sri C Rajagopalachari became the Premier of Madras and did a lot in scaling down rural indebtedness and in the field of Prohibition.

In 1942, CR resigned from the Congress owing to differences of opinion with the Congress Executive. The same year, when in August the 'Quit-India' movement was launched, CR wrote to Gandhiji : 'The first need was Hindu-Muslim agreement as to a National Government to take over power. Without that, the proposed campaign would only benefit the Japanese.' In 1943, when the non-Congress leaders met in Bombay to find means to establish reconciliation between the Government and the Congress, CR was one of the signatories to that appeal.

On April 23 1942, Rajaji got the Congress members of the Madras Legislature to recommend to the AICC that Congressmen should acknowledge the Muslim League's claim for separation in order to secure the installation of a National Government to meet the present emergency. It was resented by the Congress leaders including Patel, and was rejected by the AICC at Allahabad within a week on April 29. Gandhiji wrote to him "to sever" his connection with the Congress and then carry on his campaign in support of the Muslim League's campaign for separation.

To avoid conflict between the Congress and the Government, we find CR first knocking at the Government's door for a compromise, but when there was no response, he approached the Muslim League to reconcile its relations with the Congress in order to present a joint scheme before the British Government which had made the Hindu-Muslim rapprochement a condition precedent to the formation of a National Government. To meet this end, CR evolved a four-point formula in 1944 to serve as the basis of Congress-Muslim League settlement. The formula was approved by Gandhiji in 1943



when he was kept a prisoner in the Aga Khan Palace. The formula was published on July 10, 1944. Its provisions were:

- (1) The Muslim League was to endorse the demand for independence for the transitional period.
- (2) At the end of the war, a commission would demarcate those contiguous areas in North-West and North-East India in which the Muslims were in an absolute majority, and in those areas a plebiscite of all the inhabitants would decide whether or not they should be separated from Hindustan.
- (3) In the event of separation, agreements would be made for Defence, Commerce, Communications and other essential purposes.
- (4) The terms should be binding only in case of transfer by Britain of full power and responsibility to the Government of India.

Jinnah was not satisfied with this formula and wanted Gandhiji to "join hands with the Muslim League on the basis of Pakistan." Jinnah's interpretation of the formula was "putting the cart before the horse," for he believed that Britain would never transfer power to India.

To Gandhiji, the CR formula accepted the principle of self-determination and was a credit to him. Rajaji rejoined the Congress in 1945.

The intimate but mutually respectful relationship between Gandhiji and Rajaji is very apparent from some of their correspondence.

On 5.7.42 Gandhiji wrote to Rajaji: 'Mahadev was telling me how sad you were over my obstinacy in not appreciating what was so plain to you. All that I can say is there is no want of will about me. But I am built that way. Once an idea possesses me I can't easily get rid of the possession. I suppose you are of the same build. Therefore there seems to be no escape but to suffer each other's limitation... So long as you remain a member of the Assembly under the Congress ticket which binds its members to carry out the policy laid

down by the AICC you are bound to carry it out. If that is so, it is your duty to resign the membership of the Assembly... It will be most becoming of you to sever your connection with the Congress and then carry on your campaign with all the zeal and ability you are capable of."

Earlier on 7.6.62 Gandhiji had, however, told Rajaji: "Nonsense... These differences mean nothing...I shall no longer enter into a controversy with you... You should come here for rest, jokes and in search of strength and joy." On 13.6.42 Rajaji was told: "But you should try to let me see my error which you see so clearly."

Though they "differed as poles asunder" (Gandhiji's words) Gandhiji confided in CR in the crucial days of 1942: "Fear is writ large on our faces. Fear of doing wrong, fear of running into the imaginary enemy's trap is all a species of fear and dangerous at that. However, you have to submit till you patiently convert your companions. They are the best material we have. And it is from that we have to weave the national fabric." Earlier, once Gandhiji had asked CR: "Are we breaking up worse? You must give yourself a moment's leisure and think out where we are drifting to?"

Neither of them would spare the other and they thought so differently on some matters. In some of the letters Rajaji scathingly analysed some of the Congress stalwarts in his inimitable words. Gandhiji also did strike him hard on many occasions. In the crucial days of the Gandhi-Jinnah dialogue, Gandhiji largely depended on Rajaji although Gandhiji did not always follow his logic.

Gandhiji's relationship with Rajaji does not appear to have become cool or detached, although very often Rajaji had his own interpretation of Gandhiji's words and actions. On the question of partition, Rajaji probably had a clearer vision and firmer grip. Rajaji had not unnecessarily strengthened Jinnah's hand as is often thought because as late as 1940, Lord Willingdon had assured Jinnah that no steps would be taken without consulting him. After partition, when there were riots in West Bengal with Rajagopalachari as the Governor and Gandhiji was in Calcutta because of the riots, Rajaji



did not see much point in Gandhiji's move and had told Gandhiji that by fasting he would not be able to restrain the hooligans.

The creative mind of Rajaji was appreciated by Jawaharlal Nehru by offering him one key post after another since 1946. He is a statesman first and a statesman last and not a politician only.

The world has very few parallels to Rajaji as a statesman.

## Soul of Dharma

Rajaji was the least imposing as he was the least demonstrative of men. He belonged more than anyone to the great Congress tradition—the ‘spiritualizing-politics’ tradition, touched by the strong personality of the Mahatma. He had no respect for mass hysterias and misguided movements of the hour with their rapidly-waning enthusiasms and quick disillusionments. “How many ineffective groups calling themselves parties !” he seemed to say with absolute diffidence. Yet there was no trace of bitterness in his words nor contempt. If he wanted anything to be of help to a functioning Government in a democratic set-up, it was a disciplined opposition in the legislative bodies. He suspected very early—long before anyone dreamt of our gaining Independence—the disruptive forces here, which would easily assume such huge proportions as to obstruct our even progress. He went to the extent of prophesying in his *JAIL DAIRY* (1921), that a situation might arise after our winning Swaraj, which would make us realize the folly of having gained Liberty without adequate preparation and equipment for the task of running governments with efficiency.

With constant watchfulness of our inherent weaknesses in public administration, he developed from early years a sense of detachment and unsentimentalized outlook upon all problems. As a Municipal Chairman in his own native town of Salem, he saw to the removal of untouchability, especially in the enjoyment of civic amenities like drawing water from public taps. Long even before the Mahatma’s crusade against the intolerance of the higher castes towards untouchables, he had started his reforming zeal in ameliorative measures towards the poor and the fallen. If he was an inveterate of all methods of the Moderates in the days of the pre-Gandhian Congress, he was at the same time never slow to honour persons who were genuine patriots, but with different approaches towards the same goal.



It was a great event to welcome back Mrs Besant and her two co-adjutants, Dr George Arundale and BP Wadia, from their internment at Coonoor for their seditious propaganda of Home Rule. The three were passing in the train from the Madras and at the Salem station, where the train was likely to stop, a big crowd of admirers had gathered. The police cordon proved impregnable to CR (as he was then known) and his followers who wished to join the rest at the station. He sought a way out by opening a side-gate, at a distance from the platform, and led the crowd to the train for cheering the three patriots on their release. It was then said that CR made history in the mofussil town by so many of his acts of intrepidity unknown to the leaders of the times in public. His letters, in those early days of his entry into public life, to the editorial columns of the press as well as his trenchant articles in Tamil dailies and journals, breathed an unbending spirit of nationalism.

In Madras where he shifted towards the year 1919, he began to practise as a lawyer in the High Court of Judicature. Having been a successful cross-examiner in criminal trials in the mofussil courts, he had a reputation for his legal acumen and powers of eliciting truth in matters complicated by facts. Instances have emerged to public knowledge of his voluntary attempts at bringing to book culprits who tried to cheat the gullible public for gaining their private ends. A Brahmin with his family appeared one day before him for help saying that he was a school-master in Palghat and that on his way of pilgrimage he had lost the contents of his purse and needed pecuniary assistance. Rajaji shrewdly suspected that it was a pose to hoodwink the public into the belief of his story. Hence without much ado, he sent a wire to the headmaster of the particular school of which the visitor had mentioned he was a teacher and ascertained that there was no such person by that name. So a complaint was lodged with the local police by Rajaji, and the person was arrested and taken before the presiding magistrate. The accused confessed guilt and the magistrate sentenced him to pay a heavy fine of Rs 200 in default of which he was to undergo imprisonment for three months. Then Rajaji pleaded for reduction of the fine before the magistrate, who became irritated at his request, particularly when he had been himself instrumental in bringing the culprit to custody. But all the same Rajaji pleaded before the magistrate for a lesser fine and for



merciful treatment of the accused. Finally the amount got reduced to Rs. 10 which also the accused was in a position of despair to find the wherewithal to pay. Rajaji himself paid the fine and admonished the erstwhile accused not to indulge in such tricks in future.

Apart from his spirit of reformation of people with anti-social tendencies, he was not lost to any feeling of humanity and consideration for erring mortals in society. Very often he was found trying solutions for difficulties in which people were caught and his mind proved active and resourceful in showing the way of intelligence in straits of those who had become totally incapable of restoration. Even domestic trifles engaged his attention of those who gained no little relief by his advice and sincere approach to their problems. A young doctor was commissioned to serve in the thick of the fight near the borders of China, wherein the second world war hostilities grew into heavy proportions and inflicted casualties on Indian armies engaged in the fight. In spite of the fact that as a Congressman he was for non-cooperation with the war efforts of the Britisher, he advised the youngman to join service in the theatre of active fight, as it would give him vast experience and a sense of fearlessness in doing the duty of assuaging the pain of the wounded and the disabled in war. The doctor was benefited much by that advice, and for long he remembered the words of Rajaji in making him proceed without fear to the scene of war.

In later years, however much he was inclined to induce people to repose faith in the efficacy of religion, he was at the same time not forgetful of the claims of rational thinking and liberal education on them. If he thought with persistence the mass inoculation of the BCG and the methods of family planning adopted by the Government, he was not for one moment advancing any argument based on unscientific knowledge or mere belief or sentiment.

He always insisted on the wholesome concept of *Dharma* of our ancient land to be the only guide for us in all our integral activities. In following *Dharma* his mind normally harkened back to the dictates of scriptures such as the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*. The doctrine of duty without attachment to the fruits of one's labours held him from the very first in its firm grasp. His efforts to spread the message of



persons of light and wisdom like Marcus Aurelius, Avvai, Socrates and Tirumular did not stop at all till his last breath. In unadorned simplicity, his language spoke the wisdom of an ardent soul, ready to recognize merit wherever it was found. Thus in extracting supporting passages for his informative articles, he showed no disinclination to prefer a not widely known author too, if his utterances could bear longer remembrance.

To the last of his days he was reckoning upon the good sense of our people in defeating the new-fangled proposals for bringing about an egalitarian society based upon ideal modernism of outlook. He was harping ever on the concept of *Dharma* for our salvation, and no short cut method appealed to him in the procedure for raising a vast populace, which though not literate cent per cent, had been mostly enlivened by an education which fed upon principles of conduct derived from enduring epics as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.

## Unmoved, Unshaken, Unseduced, Unterrified

If greatness consists in the combination of character and intellect of the highest order and if it is to be measured by the lasting value of solid work done in the fields of thought and action, Rajaji cannot but be regarded as the greatest living Indian. Beyond question, this granite spirit who wears with grace and dignity the burden of his years is one of the outstanding men in world history.

Rajaji has played many parts with great distinction and has run through the gamut of high public offices, including the highest. He has been close to the heart of power for decades, but the corroding power of power has left his innate simplicity and humbleness untouched.

As Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and as a Cabinet Minister at the Centre, Rajaji practised and preached true socialism. Today when we are carried away by the type of socialism which feeds on slogans and promises, and thrives on the gullibility of the people, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the implications of true socialism which Rajaji believes in. True socialism means the investment of human and material resources in an imaginatively planned manner which can contribute to the vitality and progress of the nation, keep it in the mainstream of self-generating growth and development, raise the standard of living of the masses and bring forth the maximum gifts of each for the fullest enjoyment of all. The translation of such socialism into action demands intellect and knowledge, character and dedication. Possessing these rare attributes, Rajaji gave a truly socialist government to the people. He felt deeply for the poor without, to use his own phrase, "the condescension of aristocracy or the sense of extraordinary virtue." In an age when our "leaders" do not lead the masses but are led by the masses, when the clamour is for the



false, glittering political popularity which like faerie gold vanishes even at the touch, Rajaji stands as a rock in the wilderness of shifting sands. It is not surprising that at a time when Gandhiji's statues are defiled, his works burnt and his relevance questioned, Rajaji's clear, strong voice should be treated as the ancients treated the voice of Cassandra.

Rajaji has a mind like a razor. His mental processes have been working for decades with incredible speed and incisiveness. His towering intellect cuts sharply into the heart of a matter and then with the lift and power of imagination he offers solutions for the troubled subcontinent. The sweep of his mind is matched only by the range of his reading. His vision is almost uncanny. Gandhiji once said: "Rajaji sees at least six months ahead of me." John F Kennedy described the impact of Rajaji on him as "one of the most civilizing influences since I became President."

He has rare gift of being able to speak to different men at different levels. He can carry conviction to intellectuals with his power of deep thought and precise expression; he can address the masses equally effectively in terms which can stir their minds and hearts.

No problem has ever been too big for his capacity or too small for his attention. He is a perfectionist in everything that he does. His intellectual integrity, his indomitable courage and his absolute simplicity have already passed into a byword. However winds might veer or currents shift, Rajaji always steers by the same star, and that star is his conscience and his intellectual conviction. During the half century that he has been in public life, no one has ever been able to overcome his iron will or rupture his sense of public duty.

Seldom has so much been packed into one human life. Rajaji's English translations of Sanskrit classics and Tamil books on European classics are the finest in the field. What has made him tower over the stormy scene for so long is the fact that he, the man of thought, is also a dynamic man of action. He has rarely been equalled as an administrator. He has that unfailing, uplifted mental and moral vision, combined with the art of adroit and practical management of men and affairs, which is so essential for those who guide the footsteps of nation.



Generations later, this great and benignant lamp of wisdom and humanity will be remembered and revered when most of those who dominate the political scene today are totally forgotten. He has carried the story of Indian independence forward into a new chapter - freedom from subjugation of Indians by Indians—the full significance of which will be realized only in the years to come.

Not for Rajaji is the satisfaction of enjoying in placid quiet the autumn years of his life. For him, even at the age of 93, there is only the intense, unrelenting fervour to carry on with the task that can never end. Of all his great achievements, perhaps Clio will regard his achievement after the age of 80 as his greatest. Surrounded by politicians whose minds were shrouded in opaque ignorance, he once more decided to do what he had so often done in the past—blaze a new trail. At a time, when, despite a Constitution which enshrined the highest ideals of liberty and freedom, the citizen's basic freedoms were stifled by an all-powerful bureaucracy, when a permit-quota licence Raj laid its steel claws upon the nation's economy, and corruption stalked the land, this frail man of 80 rose once again at the centre of the national scene, and campaigned in support of true freedom. The old world of culture and dharma, of values and decorum in public life, seemed to be doomed: but it did not lack its pithy, trenchant thoughts and phrases poured from him week after week. His articles in *Swarajya* and his speeches in various States acted as a solvent of fear and despondency. In the crowded story of freedom and democracy there is no parallel to what Rajaji has attempted during the last thirteen years. Perhaps no other figure in world history has, at Rajaji's age and against such overwhelming odds, tried so much, dared so much, toiled so much and given so much to his people. This man, cast in a heroic mould, has sought to bring back to India the Spirit of Liberty, to whose defence he summoned every resource of oratory and dialectic, character and action. His message is simple—freedom cannot be inherited in the bloodstream but has to be cherished, defended and preserved by eternal vigilance and struggle.

The measure of Rajaji's stupendous contribution in the last decade is not the number of the members of his Party or the number of votes polled by them. His great work lies in the quickening of



the seminal forces of basic freedom, and in the momentum which he imparted to the living principles of the rule of law so that democracy and civil liberty may survive in India beyond our own times and in the days when our place will know us no more. He restored to us our self-respect and made us realize that we do not live by bread alone and that we are greater than we know. The lustre and respect with which a grateful nation lights his evening path, is a measure of ceaseless service he renders and still more of the character he bears.

The spirit knows no youth or age, no fatigue or death. When the spirit is fed by the well-springs of a deep, abiding faith, no task is ever done in vain, no effort is ever lost.

And so for Rajaji the unending struggle must continue, with no heed for fruits or popular acclaim. He personifies the courage never to submit or yield. There is no man whom the great words of Milton fit better:

“ .....unmoved  
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,  
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal.  
Nor number, nor example with him wrought  
To swerve from truth or change his constant mind.”

## A Transcendent Personality

It is a difficult enough task to cover, within the limitations of a short article, the major events in the life of a man who has been involved, directly or indirectly, with almost every happening of significance to India, both before and after independence. It is harder still for us to attempt an interpretation of the person himself, at this date, on the strength of these events and by considering the manner in which he brought his influence to bear upon men and matters. It is well-nigh impossible to say enough of a person like Rajaji whose complex mind could sweep the entire range of human thought. Volumes could be written of such a person and there would still be more things left unsaid than otherwise.

Gandhiji said, in 1946: "Rajaji is one of my oldest friends and was known to be the best exponent, in word and deed, of all I stand for. That in 1942 he differed from me, I know. All honour for the boldness with which he publicly avowed the difference. He is a great social reformer, never afraid to act according to his belief. His political wisdom and integrity are beyond question." This is indeed greatness admiring greatness. Sir CP Ramaswami Iyer writes: "It has been my good fortune that, with Sri Rajagopalachariar, I have preserved ties of amity, notwithstanding that, at various times, we have seriously differed on several topics both privately and openly." Rajaji was "too brave to need support from anybody" and "too philosophic to harbour an injury." Add to this a fine sense of humour which enabled him to enjoy a joke at his expense, we have here the basic ingredients of a personality which endeared itself to all. Mr Kenneth Galbraith, former US Ambassador to India goes to the extent of saying: "It was a privilege even to invite his rebuke."

While the art of gentle persuasion and quiet diplomacy came naturally to him, he could, when the occasion demanded, become the



“great dissenter.” It took mental courage of a high order to oppose towering personalities like Deshbandhu CR Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru over the question of boycott of legislature in the year 1922. Though loyal to Gandhiji, he did not approve of the “Quit India” campaign of 1942. He chose to part company with the Congress rather than go with the crowd subscribing to the popular view. Again, in 1944, he advised Gandhiji, despite strong views contrary to his own, to assent to the partition of India with the hope of speeding up the grant of independence. These honest disagreements and his firm adherence to what he thought was right led Gandhiji to call him his “conscience-keeper.”

His courage of conviction and determination to follow his own conscience often made him a seemingly aloof figure in the field of politics. But it was to him that the country turned when it needed a skillful administrator. The succession of posts he held affords sufficient testimony of this. He was the Chief Minister of Madras at critical times, administered West Bengal as Governor, was a member of the Central Cabinet. He succeeded Lord Mountbatten as the Governor-General of India: the only Indian to hold that honoured post. Very few, in the field of politics, have had this distinction of being recalled to serve the nation. In this respect it will be quite proper to compare him with George Washington of the United States of America and Sir Winston Churchill of Britain.

Rajaji, the writer, was as Rajaji, the politician. He could write practically on every subject under the sun with remarkable lucidity. His felicity of expression could make the most abstruse point seem simple. Reading his short article on the Raman Effect, a scientist is reported to have remarked that he, a scientist, could not have made it any simpler. On the other hand, he was able to condense the Vedas and Upanishads into short stories which make a lasting impression even on a child. His rendering of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana into English gave him a place among immortal writers. They are truly religious classics.

But even here Rajaji was completely free of prejudices. He refused to accept any institution or ritual just because it was ancient. This broadmindedness and spirit of tolerance formed the basis of his



social reforms. It was he who fought for the right of Harijans to enter temples for worship. His daughter was married to a son of Gandhiji. By these acts, he completely antagonized the orthodox section of his community. That in no way deterred him. He certainly practised more and preached less—a very rare quality at any time.

After his retirement from Government service, he was thoroughly disillusioned with the over-ambitious planning, indiscriminate foreign loans, reckless rise in bureaucratic control and the collapse of spiritual and moral values in the country. But he had always been a man of positive thinking. This disillusionment, which would have bred in most others a bitter cynicism, instead galvanised him into action. Age, of course, was no bar to the activities of his humming dynamo of mental energy. The result was the birth and rapid growth of the Swantantra Party which was the only party—with the exception, perhaps, of the Communist Party—to offer a meaningful and practical alternative to the policies pursued by the Congress Government.

Rajaji was essentially an intellectual and a consequence he never played to the gallery. Dignity of expression is a common characteristic of all his speeches and writings. Nor was he a slave to the commonplace virtue of consistency. What was good for the people in a given set of circumstances was the basic consideration that weighed with him. That was the reason he could, in the language of a well-known philosopher, be inherently consistent although he might overtly contradict himself.

Rajaji's rather cold exterior and unemotional approach to problems have led many to suppose, wrongly that he was unfeeling. On the contrary, he possessed the warmest of hearts—"a heart of gold"—as Satyamurthy phrased it. He was keenly sensitive to any situation that affected mankind as a whole. Nothing else disturbed his mind more than the unreasonable arm-race among the big powers and the pollution of atmosphere by radioactive fall-outs caused by nuclear explosion. It is significant that the only foreign tour he made in all his life was in the cause of world peace and the welfare of mankind. He headed a delegation sponsored by the Gandhi Peace



Foundation and effectively espoused the fundamental right of human beings to live in peace and to breathe pure and unpolluted air. His scholarly arguments impressed all the heads of States. Rajaji was the finest flower of Indian heritage and culture, a true interpreter of the wisdom of our classics, a moral colossus, a wise and farseeing statesman and a lover of all humanity. Peaceful as was his nature all through his life, his end also was peaceful. His last words were : "I am very happy." And the ability to say that is given to very few mortals.

## His Legacy

Rajaji was one of those persons whose stature rises with time. During his life, he was reserved and avoided as far as possible publicity for himself. He declined the offer of Presidentship of the Congress many times even though the offers were made and pressed by Gandhiji, Sardar Patel and even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It was only the insistence of Gandhiji and Sardar Patel that made him take up the leadership in 1937 elections to the Madras Assembly and subsequent assumption of office as Premier. As office acceptance by the Congress was decided upon mainly by his efforts, he could not decline the leadership. This was the case also when he agreed to join the provisional Government at the Centre in 1946 under Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. When Sardar Patel suggested that, in the then circumstances of fratricidal communal conflict in Bengal, he was the proper person to become the Governor of Bengal, Rajaji readily gave up his important position in the Indian Cabinet to take up the troublesome task in 1947. Many leaders of Bengal who were sceptical about his appointment became his ardent admirers.

Rajaji was of the view that every person in public life should have his resignation in his pocket. He resigned his Presidentship of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee on the ground that Dr TSS Rajan, who was his trusted co-worker, defied his authority and set up a rival against the Congress candidate in the Tiruchi municipal election. Again, in 1942, when he felt that the 'Quit India' movement was unwise and contrary to the interests of the country, he resigned even the primary membership of the Congress and had later to be persuaded to rejoin the Congress. During his Governor-Generalship in 1949, the Congress members of Parliament and their leaders and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were divided in their minds whether Rajaji or Dr Rajendra Prasad should be the first President. Rajaji was willing to consider the idea



only if the request came from Dr Rajendra Prasad and as it did not come, he withdrew from the contest. Again, when he joined the Central Cabinet in 1950 at the request of Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel, he took over the Home Ministership after the death of the Sardar. Rajaji found that he was not being consulted by Pandit Nehru in the same way as before the Sardar's death, and he resigned his office against the pleadings of his friends and admirers. The story is well-known how he had to be persuaded against his will to rescue the Congress in Madras in 1952 and how he resigned when he found that there was a faction against him.

Absolute purity and integrity in public and private life was almost an obsession with him. Even Gandhiji was inclined to be lenient if the person concerned expressed his regret. But Rajaji was inflexible, though he had no difficulty in forgetting differences in policies and ideas so long as the integrity of a person was not in question. Whether he was Chief Minister of Madras or Cabinet Minister at the Centre, or Governor of Bengal, or Governor-General, he lived the same simple life as he did at the Gandhi Ashram. He was very particular that public expenditure on his account should be limited to the minimum. He never went abroad once on behalf of the Gandhi Peace Foundation to plead for the banning of nuclear tests.

Even when he was very active in politics, he found time for extensive reading. The fact that he began to learn Sanskrit at a comparatively late age and became almost a scholar in it is indicative of his persistence and intellectual calibre. As had been rightly remarked by many, his books in Tamil and English will prove to be a more permanent contribution than even his long long public life. They were all intended to promote religion and morality. He had a uniquely attractive style in Tamil and English, of which lucidity and simplicity were the main characteristics. I may mention that the length of his public service of over 70 years exceeded that of almost all prominent public workers of modern India. In the quality of his service, he was excelled only by his great master, Mahatma Gandhi.

## His Love for His Fellow Men

There is a spark of divinity in every man. How this spark is handled, fanned and embellished is often a matter of individual choice.

Those who make the right option lend to the spark further sheen and lustre. Thus, they become the Good Samaritans. They stand with the poor and the oppressed. They champion the case of a better social and economic deal to the exploited section of society.

They plead for justice and peace. They abhor violence. They detest hatred in any form and cherish tolerance. They have no malice toward anyone. They thus constitute, like Abu Ben Adam, the rare band of men whom God loves.

To this rare band belonged Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, more affectionately called Rajaji and still more briefly as CR.

It was his understanding of the ultimate meaning of life that lifted him above the common mass and inducted him into the elite circle of those whom God loves.

Early in his life he broke through barriers built by men on the basis of caste, creed, colour and religion. He saw God in every living thing. He could neither understand nor appreciate the social taboos which kept one section of the populace in a state of utter subjugation.

His resistance to social restrictions made him suspect in the eyes of the traditionalists. They tried to curb his impetuosity with mild reproaches. When their words fell on deaf ears, they launched a campaign to ostracise him and thus to bring him round. They lashed out at him for organising inter-caste cosmopolitan dining.

They delivered the final blow when his father died in 1914. He



could not get any Brahmin priest to conduct the religious rituals connected with the cremation.

This concerted move by Brahmin orthodoxy did not, however, turn Rajaji away from his chosen path. He had set his eyes on the lofty goal. He could reach that goal only by cultivating humanism of the highest order.

He defiantly stood against conventions and proved his determination to bring relief to the lowest strata of society during his term as chairman of the Salem Municipality.

He upheld the right of the untouchables. (later renamed Harijans by Gandhiji), to use public water taps. It was a reform that roused much ire from many quarters. But Rajaji sensed that he should rather put up with the criticism of the upper class than yield to their pressures and give up the humanitarian measure.

It was the same spirit which came out in a more fulgent form during his tenure as Premier of Madras Province in 1937. He opened the gates of temples, which had till then shut out a large section of Hindus – the untouchables. It was a historic redemption of his basic philosophy that all men are equal, that discrimination and segregation among human beings stood in the way of development and progress.

He introduced the Agriculturists Relief Act to save the poor peasants from the clutches of big *mirasdars* and money-lenders. He realised the havoc caused by drink on the economy of the poor workers and peasants. He championed prohibition and silenced the economic pundits who asserted that the gap in revenues due to prohibition would be unbridgeable by coming out with his innovation, the sales tax.

His humanism shone brightly in his dealings with those who were comrades in the struggle for independence, those who, after independence, found themselves often at loggerheads with him.

Kamaraj had certainly not endeared himself to Rajaji when the former manipulated political strings to oust Rajaji from the Chief Ministership of Madras in 1954.

Rajaji had accepted the post only when the Congress, in a minority in the legislature, sought him to provide stability to the administration. After he had grandly retrieved the situation and given a firm foothold for the Congress, he was sent out into the political wilderness.

But Rajaji did not hold any personal animosity towards Kamaraj for what had happened. He accepted it as part of political life. He still held Kamaraj in great regard, respected his political acumen and his inherent patriotism. He gave expression to his freedom from malice when he joined the elite gathering at Satyamurthi Bhavan to greet Kamaraj on his 61st birthday.

Reminiscing on the event, Kamaraj later stated, "My 61st birthday was in 1964. Arrangements were made to celebrate it in Madras. On that day I got down at Meenambakkam airport from Tiruchi. Those who showered their love on me took me in a procession from the airport to Satyamurthi Bhavan.

"I found to my surprise that Rajaji was waiting for me at Satyamurthi Bhavan and he garlanded me and blessed me saying, 'you should live longer than me,' I was thrilled. Rajaji had been waiting there for a long time expecting me. That was a time when there was strong difference of opinion between us.

"I still feel that Rajaji's blessings were a unique experience in my life that I could not have anticipated. Rajaji is far above likes and dislikes, differences of opinions and differences in age. He is the one man who has the rare quality to consider and respect man as man."

It was his respect of man as man which kept him out of the controversy which reigned in political and journalistic circles after the publication of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's book, *India Wins Freedom*.

The book was published posthumously. There were some conclusions and observations which, many felt, were not borne out by the facts—figments of the author's imagination. There was commotion all around.

Press reporters, specially, were eager to draw out the comments



of the stalwarts of the national struggle, to find out their reactions to the version of the struggle as painted by the Maulana.

Rajaji refused to get involved in the verbal arguments. He said to Monica Felton, who was close to him and who wrote the book, *I Meet Rajaji*, "These debates about what happened in the past are merely vanity."

When his friends pressed him to offer his comments, he refused their request with the plea, "No, I will not enter into this competition in vanity ..... There is not real history written any more. Everybody writes in order to demonstrate something instead of to tell what really happened..... I don't want to say unkind things about the dead..... Azad is now mixed up with the universal spirit."

Aware of the universal spirit latent in every living thing, Rajaji never allowed ego to sway him. He remained humble and selfless and did not allow power and position to corrode his nature.

He explained his outlook to official positions during his address to the Old Boys' Association of the Central College at Bangalore in 1937. At that time, Rajaji was the Premier of Madras State.

He observed, "I have been waiting for this honour for sometime ..... I was wondering why you did not invite me till now to preside over a College Day. Year after year, I was looking forward to an invitation. Nobody knew why I was hungering for this honour of being asked to preside.

"Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that this honour has come too late. You have invited me only after I became the Prime Minister of a Province. If, when I was a plain Old Boy, Rajagopalachari, you had invited me, I would have prized the honour much more.

"I think you are today honouring the Prime Minister and not the Old Boy. Can ever a man be so stupid as to speak so frankly? But I have a reason, friends. You should not worship position and authority."

Unaffected by power and position, Rajaji remained humane in his approach. Ranganathan, India's ace librarian, has recorded

his encounter with Rajaji during the United Nations Day Celebrations in New Delhi in 1948.

There was an elite gathering, with the top brass of the diplomatic corps in attendance. Ranganathan was seated in the back row, intent only on listening to Rajaji. But Rajaji spotted him out.

Ranganathan states, "He tore his way to where I was and said, 'What have you professors to do with this political show? I said, 'We are here to add an academic flavour to this political gathering!' Then we adjourned to see some film show.

"Naturally, Rajaji sat in the front row. I was sitting about ten rows behind. The ADC came to me and said, 'His Excellency calls you.' I went to him.

"He said in Tamil, 'Sit down here; a Professor or a librarian is as good as a Governor-General. Why are you shy and go to the back bench?' Can one imagine human values and human relations rising to greater heights than this?"

### NOBLE

Rajaji cherished human relations as the essence of love. The love which bound him to human beings had sprouted during his days in school. It assumed the form of a close link between him and his teacher, John Guthrie Tait. Tait taught him English.

After Tait retired and returned to his native Scotland, Rajaji regularly sent him every month one pound of the finest Indian tobacco. When Rajaji was in jail, he arranged for the supply of tobacco to his master through his friends.

The supply was kept up despite the hectic pace of Rajaji's life as a fighter for national liberation. Until death, Tait had his choice tobacco, thanks to his student who did not forget the real worth of human bonds.

Love coursed through him in abundant measure, love that was primordial and pristine, noble and sublime. This love drew into its vortex many ordinary people and left them indelibly marked with the touch of the great man. Some of those incidents carry the flavour of Rajaji's humanism.



When the patron of a danseuse died suddenly, Rajaji interceded on her behalf with the members of the family of the patron.

Suddenly, one lonely, old withered figure broke out of the crowd. It ran, eluding the chasing cop, making a baseline towards the car in which Rajaji was riding.

Rajaji spotted the figure. He stared at the man. Suddenly, he recognised his old cook, the one who had served him thirty years back, at Salem, when he was a leading advocate of the local bar.

He leaned out, waved to the security staff to let the man come near him. He accepted the greetings of the cook, asked him to come and meet him at his camp.

Later, when the cook met him, Rajaji enquired about his welfare and gave him a hundred rupees as a token of his love.

Rajaji considered no task below his dignity. He considered work as worship.

Once during his stay at Pudupalayam village in Salem district, where he established a Gandhi Ashram and propagated Gandhian views and introduced charkha and khadi industries, he spotted a displaced mesh of the chimney.

Instead of sending for the man who normally attended to such tasks, Chinnan, Rajaji decided to do it himself. He lifted a ladder, set it against the wall, ascended the ladder and reached out for the mesh. He reached up, stretching himself further, delicately keeping his foothold on the step of the ladder.

Lakshmi, Rajaji's daughter, who came in at that time, got the fright of her life. She sensed that the ladder was likely to slip, that her father might fall and get hurt. She shouted, "Is not Chinnan there? Will he not do it? What if you fall and injure yourself?"

Rajaji, still holding on to the mesh, shouted back, "If he falls and injures himself, it does not matter, does it?"

It was his timely intervention which saved the small holding of a poor peasant and stopped him from migrating to Ceylon. He owed

around Rs. 1,000 to a rich landlord. The interest charge on the amount also was piling up.

The poor peasant had no means of clearing the loan. The landlord, who held a mortgage over the peasant's holding, threatened action. Left with no alternative, the poor peasant decided to migrate to Ceylon to earn his living there as a plantation worker.

The news of the peasant's plight reached Rajaji. He sent for the landlord and suggested that he waive his interest charges and agree to be satisfied with the principal amount. The landlord agreed.

Then Rajaji asked one of his friends, man with enough money, to advance the amount to the poor peasant so that he could pay off the landlord. He also directed the poor peasant to gradually return the loan, without any interest, to the person who advanced the amount.

In every deal which he struck, in every tenuous negotiation he handled, he kept the basic human values in mind. Thus, when he decided to leave Salem and settle down in Madras, he sold his house to Dr. Sundaram at much below the prevailing price.

In taking this decision Rajaji was guided by the declared objective of Dr. Sundaram to open a hospital. Rajaji argued, "Dr. Sundaram wants that house only to do service to the public. Let us not bargain over the price. Let us accept what he can pay."

A few snippets from a plethora of incidents do not bring out the full range and variety of Rajaji's humanism. But they do carry the flavour of his basic love for humanity. They reveal the quality of his mind, a mind that responded and vibrated to the demands of justice, truth, kindness and peace. His humanism marked him out as a truly great man.

There were three things which he sought in every great man: "First, a man's brain. And a woman's heart. And a child's temperament—a child's freshness of outlook." These three blended into a composite whole formed the spark of divinity ingrained in him and his humanism truly divine.



## His Sense of Humour

Of the many qualities Rajaji possessed, the dominating one was his subtle sense of humour. His humour was pleasant, enjoyable, elegant, though at times caustic and ironical. Often Rajaji's comments were piercingly forthright. His answers were not so simple as they sounded. The ingredients of his humour also varied vastly. Sometimes his humour sparkled, and at times his wit devastated. It was instant and contagious and it kept him young and spirited for years. This is borne out by several anecdotes told by his friends, journalists and authors who have written books on him. Among these are one Bimlesh Chatterjee, who was for long Military Secretary to Rajaji and who has written a very absorbing and interesting book on him—*Thousand Days With Rajaji*, and Monica Felton, author of *I Meet Rajaji*.

When Rajaji was the Governor of West Bengal, he once visited a hospital. At a certain place on the path, there was an open drain in front! Seeing it, Rajaji asked, "Why has it been kept uncovered? Surely not on hygienic necessity or to carry out some research on sanitation? I can also see a sweeper's broom on the staircase. Is that kept here to adorn the place?"

He continued, "Some parts of the coconut tree, such as the fruits and leaves, are used as decoration at welcomes. But this is a new experience to see the leaves' ribs (the broom) used to welcome someone."

Rajaji could make a pun on himself. Once talking about his dark glasses he said, "With my rectifying glasses I can see things which are there, but some of my critics say that with my dark glasses I can see even things which are not there!"

Rajaji once visited a zoological garden. When his car drew up at the main gate of the zoo, the authorities were all waiting there to

receive him. Rajaji cryptically said, "Why have you all taken the trouble to come here? I have come only to meet the poor creatures which are kept confined here for no fault of theirs." In the zoo he saw a hippopotamus all alone in a muddy ditch. Rajaji remarked, what a magnificent specimen of God's creation! I see, it is a male. But is it a bachelor or a widower?'

When he learnt that its mate had died only recently, Rajaji observed, "That is cruel! Restricted to this artificial home, he should have been given another bride."

A lady visitor to the Governor's house asked Rajaji pointing towards an ancient gun mounted on a platform; "Why don't you get those relics removed? In the changed order of things they seem to be quite out of place here." The Governor replied, "I am only a non-paying tenant in this House. Those who now control these properties may not perhaps like to dismantle the signposts of history with the sweep of a pen. You do not seem to be satisfied with the restoration of the country's independence. You should allow some time for the scabs and scales of the old disease to fall off. If you know the disease is cured, why get impatient with those little ugly scars?"

Once Rajaji asked Gandhiji why he did not care to stay with him at the Governor's House. "That house is much too big for me," replied Gandhiji.

Mr. Suhrawardy, who was sitting near by, said, "The Mahatma likes to live with the people. *Palaces have no fascination for him.*"

"That was why he was put up in the Aga Khan's palace!" twitted Rajaji.

Once Rajaji went to see Gandhiji and found that his camp was surrounded by a huge crowd of people blocking the approaches and also some policemen. Rajaji remarked, "Poor Mahatma! A prisoner in freedom. Worse than me!"

Once Rajaji had gone to see a football match. During the interval a number of people came forward to have a closer look at him. Looking at them, Rajaji said, "They have all come to see the non-playing star."



Once Rajaji visited a residential school. He also visited its sick-room. He asked the sister-in-charge of the sick-room what were the illnesses that the boys usually suffered from. He was told that the common ailments were cough, cold, cuts, sprains and minor injuries. Out of politeness the Rector asked Rajaji to suggest a way to reduce the incidence of these ailments. Rajaji said, "I shan't give out the solution, for that would be interfering with professional matters. But if you want me to drop a hint then I would say that the sister should lose some of her attractiveness."

Rajaji accompanied by the Rector went to have tea with the Rector and his wife. At the cottage Rajaji was conducted to a cosy room where a strong woodfire was blazing.

"Very good," exclaimed Rajaji, "this is not going to be a cold reception?"

When the Rector said that the fire was his wife's idea, Rajaji remarked, "As may be expected of the Rector of a Rector!" When he saw too many eatables—pastries, biscuits, sandwiches, fruits and nuts, spread around him on small tables he said, "You make me uncharitably prominent with this enormous collection of food. This must be your idea. The Rector unrectified!"

Rajaji once visited a dairy and was requested to taste a glass of milk. Rajaji thanked for the offer and said, "I have had enough calories for the day. Better give my share to some deserving person, and if here is no such person in this group, then give it to a calf whose mother is drying up."

Once Monica Felton, author of the famous book, *I Meet Rajaji*, was sitting with C.R. When two Americans—Molly and Richard—came to see him, they had come to India on a holiday, he asked them: "Have you seen Mahabalipuram?"

"Yes, we were there yesterday."

"And, I suppose," Rajaji said, "that you were told there are two historic relics in Madras that every tourist should see and that you ought not miss the ancient monument in this house either?"

Once Rajaji met Mrs. Naidu after the stormy session of the AICC which discussed the question of removal of Netaji Subhas Bose from the Presidentship of the Congress. It may be remembered that Subhas Bose had won in the face of opposition from Gandhiji and had defeated his opponent, Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, was a staunch critic of Netaji and she had vehemently lashed out at Bose, forcing him to accept the leadership of Gandhi. Rajaji complimented Mrs. Naidu on this "You performed today a Mrs. Herculean task."

When Rajaji was Premier of Madras, he wanted to bring in some measure to reduce the indebtedness of the masses and to free them from the clutches of moneylenders. During a discussion in the State Legislature, an opposition member advised Rajaji to collect statistics of indebtedness of the masses before bringing in his proposed Bill. Rajaji replied: "If my friend, troubled by mosquitoes, wants to go in for a mosquito-curtain, he will certainly not take a census of mosquitoes and their proportion of distribution between Mylapore and George Town."

While inaugurating the Swatantra Party formally at a function in Bombay in August 1959, Rajaji invoked the blessings of God at the end of his speech. A few days later, at a press conference, Nehru remarked: "They have even made God a senior partner of the Party. They are here, not dealing with politics and economics, but with stratosphere, with the Almighty presiding over their destinies." To this Rajaji retorted: "As for his taunts about partnership with God, the Prime Minister has stumbled on the cardinal religious doctrine of the Divine presence in trying to mock at us."

When Rajaji was the Home Minister, he was in favour of accepting some recommendations presented before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Central Cabinet. These were not liked by Nehru and some other members of the Committee. Rajaji pleaded in vain for the acceptance of the recommendations. When he concluded, Nehru observed, in a lighter vein: "You see, Rajaji, the majority is with me." Rajaji grinned and said: "Yes, Jawaharlal, the majority is with you, but logic is with me."

Once Rajaji was travelling with an Englishman by train on a



very hot day. The Englishman told Rajaji : "It's a very hot afternoon."

"Not hot enough," replied Rajaji.

"Not hot enough? What do you mean?" the Englishman asked, with a slight edge to his voice.

"Not hot enough," said Rajaji smiling "to keep you gentlemen out of our country."

Rajaji once visited a piggery and asked if the pigs were artificially fed or allowed a free feed of their choice in the open.

"They are all cereal-fed," answered the Manager, "and their movements are absolutely restricted. They of course sun in the open under supervision."

"Then they will have a sympathetic visitor in me," said Rajaji.

On a chilly afternoon Rajaji once journeyed a long way, on a hill-station, to visit a well-known 'Home' established by a reputed Scottish missionary. Receiving him the head of the institution enquired whether the drive had been comfortable.

"The warmth of your reception, I am sure," observed Rajaji, "will take away the chill of the evening."

Rajaji once saw a flock of sheep bringing down big bundles of wool on their back. He said, "This is sheer mockery ! I suppose each of those innocent creatures is carrying its own sheared wool."

Sometimes Rajaji reacted to flattery. At a party, a guest said, "We are lucky in having a politician of your calibre as the Governor of this Province." Rajaji retorted, "I can assure you that I have not so far done anything which should make you feel happy. If you say that in appreciation of my past performances, then obviously you are exaggerating. And if you say that to flatter me, then you are only deceiving yourself." When he was told that the gentleman must be feeling hurt he said : "Did I drop a brick ?"

During the Second World War, there was the threat of a Japanese attack and it was rumoured that Madras would be evacuated. Many senior British officials, with their families, sought the safety of

the hills. This provoked Rajaji. He twitted : "Are the King and the Queen and members of the British Cabinet running away from London with only 20 miles of the English Channel separating them from the marching hordes of Hitler ?"

His humour helped him to face hostile mobs. Rajaji had gone to Bombay to attend the AICC Session held there on August 8-9, 1942, to discuss and decide on Gandhiji's Quit India call. Once in a meeting at Bombay he was greeted by catcalls and shouts of "Rajaji go back !" Not only this, a demonstrator hurled at him, with unerring aim, a tar-filled paperball. The ball burst, smearing Rajaji's face with tar. It trickled down and doused his khadi clothes too.

Rajaji, unmoved, went to the dais and said : "Friends, let us, first of all, congratulate the young man who threw tar at me with such perfect aim. He disagrees with me. Endowed with courage of conviction, he naturally wanted to give expression to it. Today, India sorely needs more such bold young men with grit and determination."

At another occasion when a stone thrown by some miscreant missed him, Rajaji said, "I know that the young man who was throwing stones cannot aim properly. If he is a good marksman, he could have found a place in the police department and risen very high."

Sir T. Vijayaraghavachari, one of Rajaji's dear friends, liked to pull Rajaji's leg. Once he told Bimlesh Chatterjee, Rajaji's Military Secretary, in Rajaji's presence, "I am glad you are surviving my friend's contact. He is known to be an exacting taskmaster, but what is bewildering about him is that, acting as an Alternating Current he attracts one by his sincerity and humour, but at the next moment he repels you by his taciturnity and abrupt ways. So, with him one does not really know whether one is coming or going. You seem to have got steady in his sphere." There was no sign of irritation on Rajaji's face. He simply said, "Don't be childish."

Once Sir T. Vijayaraghavachari told Rajaji that his memory was failing him. Rajaji retorted : "Memory is not absolutely essential in



the office of the Governor-General. The Prime Minister serves me as my brain”.

Rajaji seemed to enjoy his friend's discomfiture. He looked intensely amused when Sir TV asked Bimlesh Chatterjee if he knew what the letter 'C' in the Governor-General's initials stood for. Before he could say, 'Chakravarti' Rajaji broke into laughter and said "Childish".

"You see, our Governor-General is trying to confuse us," intervened Sir TV. It is neither Childish, nor Charming. It could be Clever, but many of his friends say that the 'C' stands for Cynic."

Passing an ancient gun mounted on a platform, Rajaji said, "I prayerfully wish that all these monuments of might, these symbols of destruction, could be put up in some less conspicuous place. And if they must adorn the residences of the Governors then their barrels could be pointed towards the House and not towards the people."

A gentleman remarked from the rear, "That is very true, Your Excellency. These guns are incompatible with the philosophy of non-violence."

Hardly had he completed his sentence, Rajaji snapped back, "A country cannot be governed by the weapons of non-violence if the people continue to carry their aggressiveness of mind. Leave aside the Defence Services and the Police, as long as young volunteers feel the need of sticks to control a crowd, I tell you, we will not be deemed to have developed that sense of orderliness which is implicit in 'ahimsa'."

Pointing his stick at an orderly who was trying to push his way about, Rajaji said, causing a burst of laughter, "There you see violence in its simple physical form, and I am sure you will not be surprised if I say that this guilty person serves me my daily food."

Rajaji was coming to Delhi by air. As the aircraft was approaching Delhi, a dust storm had just swept over Palam airport. The co-pilot informed him that the arrangements for the VIP reception at the airport had to be freshly drawn up as they had been badly dislocated by the dust winds.

The word VIP set off a humorous interlude, Rajaji said with an innocent look, "The trouble is that I am only a Very Innocent Person." Not familiar with Rajaji's ways, the Squadron-Leader said, "But sir, this is a VIP aircraft."

Rajaji added, "I see, the *valian* (carrier) is mightier than the god. No wonder the peripatetic bulls of Calcutta or elsewhere receive such attention and adoration from the public, when the countless Siva temples continue to decay for want of minimum attention."

Profulla Chandra Ghosh, former Chief Minister of West Bengal, has narrated an interesting incident depicting Rajaji's sense of humour. He along with Acharya Profulla Chandra Ray was proceeding to Kakinada to attend the Congress Session. When they boarded the train at Bezwada for their journey to Kakinada, Rajaji was the lone passenger in the compartment. On spotting him out, Acharya Profulla Chandra Ray turned to his companion and noted: "frail, fragile frame." Immediately Rajaji said: "Leading to the fourth F—failure."

According to Horace Alexander "Rajaji kept throughout his life that sense of proportion that we call a sense of humour. How he enjoyed that fine gold-headed stick that was, in a sense, his staff of office! One day he observed, with his usual trinkle, that one great advantage of his position was that he always saw people dressed in their best clothes."

Rajaji complimented the people of Madras on their sense of humour. He said, "They possess a sense of humour, which is the highest philosophy. Let it not be given up. Humour is the highest philosophy Vedanta may discover."

It was Rajaji's firm conviction that love was above looks. He said, "Dr. Johnson's wife was a very plain woman and many years older than he was, yet he loved her very much. The idea of saying that love is based on appearances is like saying; Let me see what you look like when you go into the bathroom."

Rajaji was against caste, creed and communal feelings. When a correspondent asked him what his *gotra* was, he replied, "I'm of the Srivastava *gotra*, but neither my intellect nor my folly is traceable to it."



Rajaji was a staunch supporter of removal of untouchability. At an AICC Session someone asked him : "Must we touch every scavenger in filthy clothes ? Would you do it yourself ?" Rajaji replied : "I would not mind touching even you, my friend. But that does not mean that I must stop to touch every scavenger that passes by."

Shri Pyarelal, who was Gandhiji's Private Secretary, has also narrated an anecdote which shows Rajaji's wit. He states: "Once I had an exquisite experience. He had mentioned to me a very long South Indian name with three letter initials, indicating the place of birth, father's name, caste, etc, of the person concerned as it is common in the South—e.g., KAS Subramaniam (Kaveripathnam Appaswamy Shankara Subramaniam). "Let me call a stenographer," I quipped as he began to spell it out in full. Ignoring my remark, he quietly changed the topic. After a little while, he asked innocently : "What's Hakim Sahib's name ?"

"Hakim Ajmal Khan," I replied. "Why, what's the matter ?"

"No," he persisted, "How do they refer to him at a public meeting ?"

It was customary in those early Non-Cooperation days in the Punjab to confer elaborate honorific titles on national leaders. Hakim Ajmal Khan had been exalted as a Masih-ul-Mulk, Hazal-u-Hakim, Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb. The moment I began, Rajaji sprang to the kill for which he had been long waiting. "Stop, let me call a stenographer!" he cut in with a grin and a twinkle.

Rajaji, as Governor and later as Governor General, had to throw numerous parties. Sometimes it became difficult to cater to the tastes of hundreds of guests. Once a guest asked for a glass of milk at the end of his dinner. Rajaji asked, "Is he hoping to be provided with a bed after dinner also?" Once a guest enquired from an attendant whether pure ghee or vegetable fat was used for a particular preparation. Learning this, Rajaji wanted to know whether the guest had enquired if the ghee was made from home-made butter, and whether the butter was extracted from the milk of a black cow.

As the Governor-General was getting up, a guest noticed a

couple of crows hopping around in search of food crumbs and said, "Aren't they cunning? How they look through one eye and hop sideways cautiously to get at the food?" "That is not the characteristic of crows only," admonished Rajaji. "You see it in the human fraternity also, not for tit-bits, but for good bits!"

Dr. B.C. Roy, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, was being escorted across the gardens of the Rashtrapathi Bhavan. The Chief Minister looked around and in his usual full-throated voice asked, "What is this? A garden or a cemetery?" Seeing Rajaji, approaching Dr. Roy said, "Rajaji, I had not seen this garden closely. Its lay-out seems very much like that of a well-kept cemetery."

"Now, don't tell that to anybody else," said Rajaji. "There are talks going on converting this place to one thing or the other. Your suggestion, though nice, would add to the prevailing confusion."

Dr. Roy asked him if he was really relinquishing his office of Governor-General.

"The office itself is getting liquidated," said Rajaji. "So there is no way out but to relinquish."

"But your services cannot be dispensed with, now," said Dr. Roy. "I am sure they are not going to put you in the cupboard."

"I am ignorant about the technicalities of a dispensary," remarked Rajaji. "On the question of dispensing, therefore, they might perhaps consult my distinguished doctor friend. I only hope that the cupboard in which they place me would not be labelled "Poison".

Once the Governor-General went to see one of his relatives in a private car. On his return his car was stopped at the gate. The armed guard at the gate did not allow the Governor-General's car to enter. The plain-clothed ADC told the sentry that the car was carrying the Governor-General; but he continued to challenge the car with his fixed bayonet. One of the guards repeatedly flashed his torchlight at Rajaji in an attempt to identify him, while Rajaji calmly reclined in the corner of the rear seat till the security officer reached the scene and recognized the Governor-General and opened the gate.



On this incident Rajaji only commented : "Those poor fellows were only trying to be extra-cautious in discharging their duties. I should have used a Government House-car. However, the drama was not altogether uninteresting, except for the fact that a silly man was trying to dramatise the scene all the more by playing his powerful spotlight on my eyes."

At a luncheon party one of the guests asked Rajaji if he did not feel tired flying long distances, Rajaji's immediate reply was, "Not so much as I do replying to short questions."

